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GAMEFAN

THE LAST TRUE ENTHUSIAST MAGA



Agetec's Armored Core 2

PlayStation 2 Arrives!!!

Dynasty Warriors 2
Ridge Racer V
X-Squad
SSX

There can be only one!!! Madden vs. NFL 2K1

Capcom vs. SNK The dream finally comes true!

Plus:

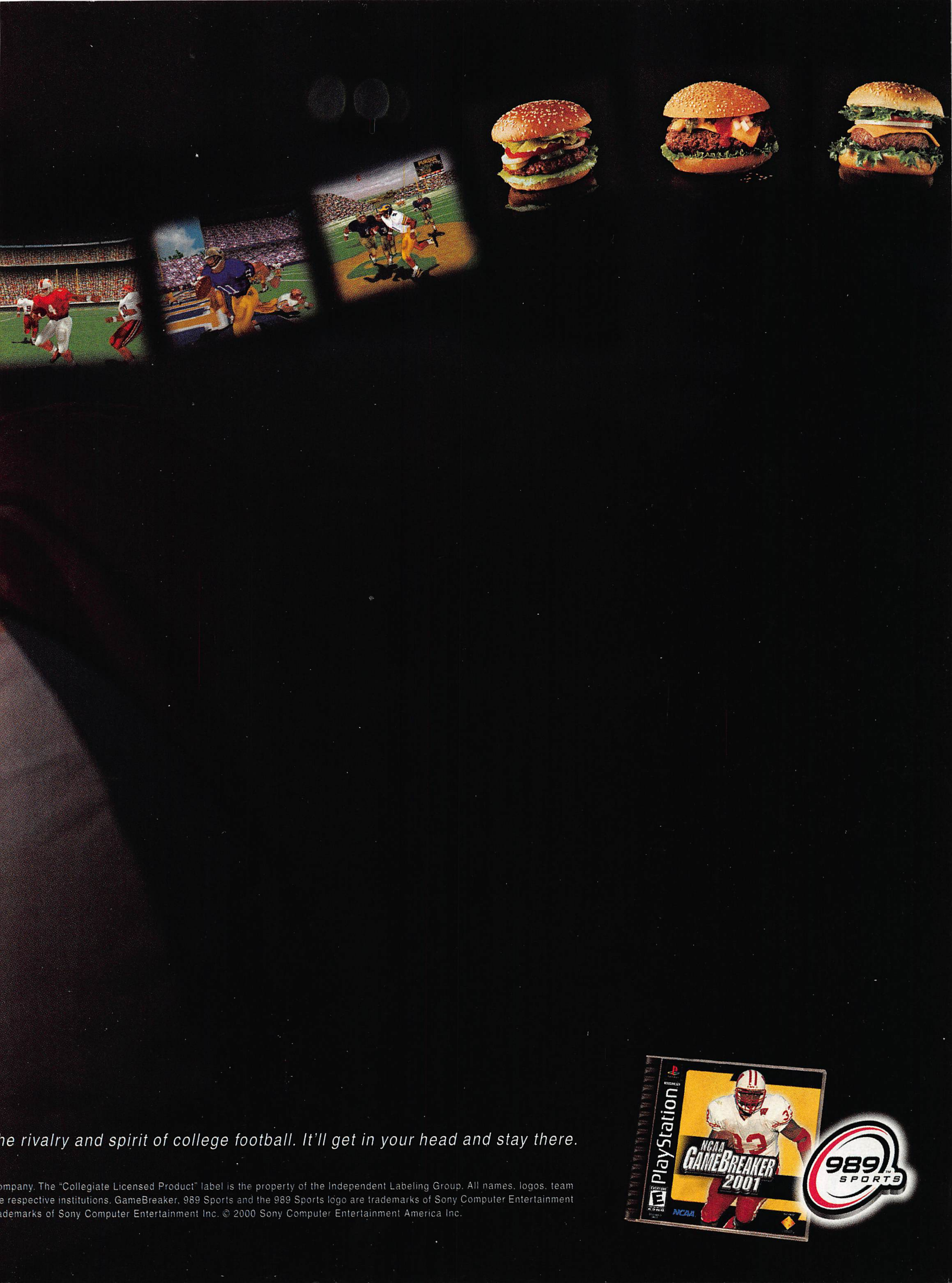
Looney Tunes Space Race
Mario Story
Mars Matrix

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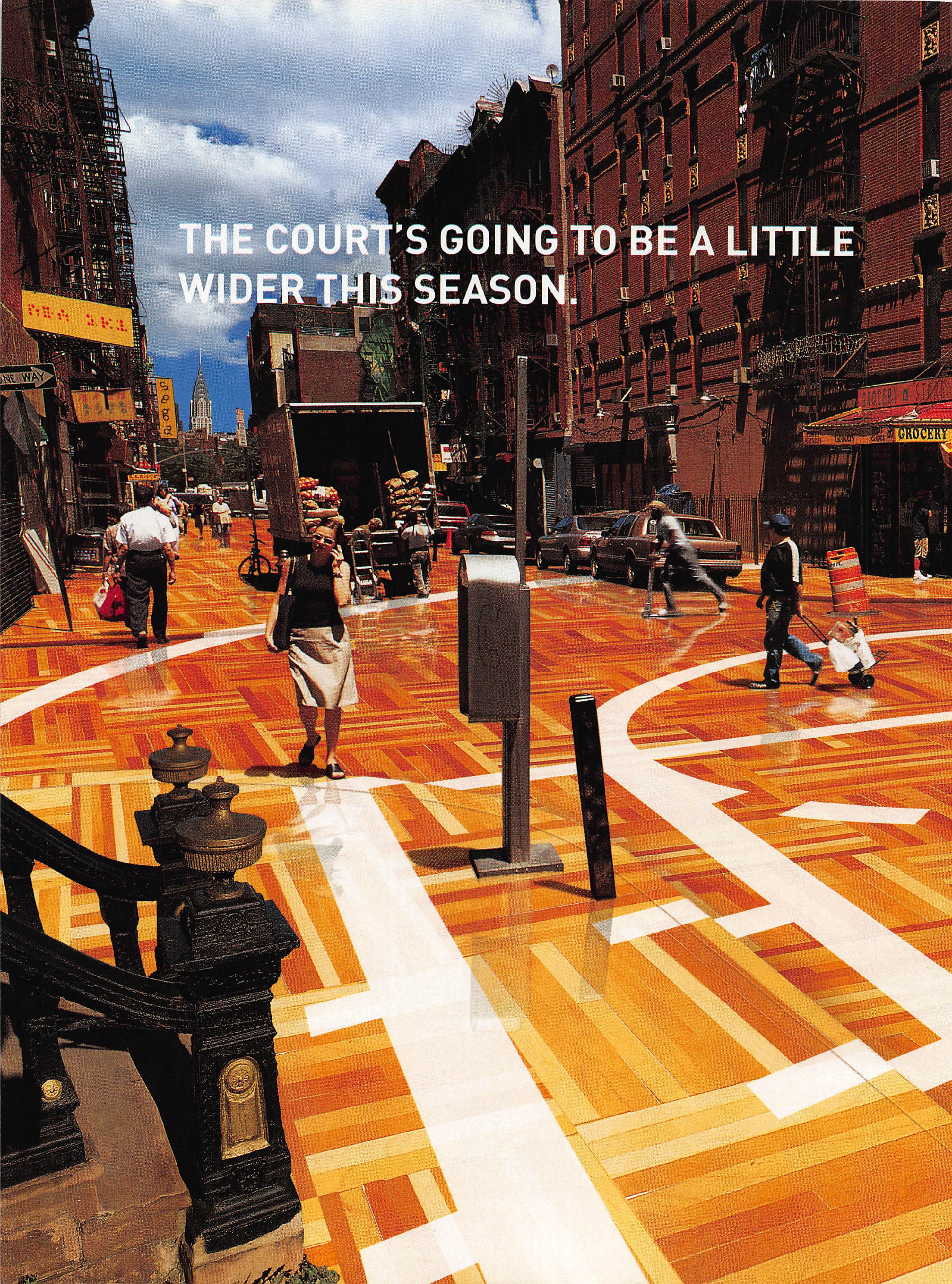

From the option attack and wing T formations, to the fight songs and crowd chants of 115 Division I-A teams, we've capture
PlayStation
COLLEGIATE LICENSED PRODUCT
NCAA
EVERYONE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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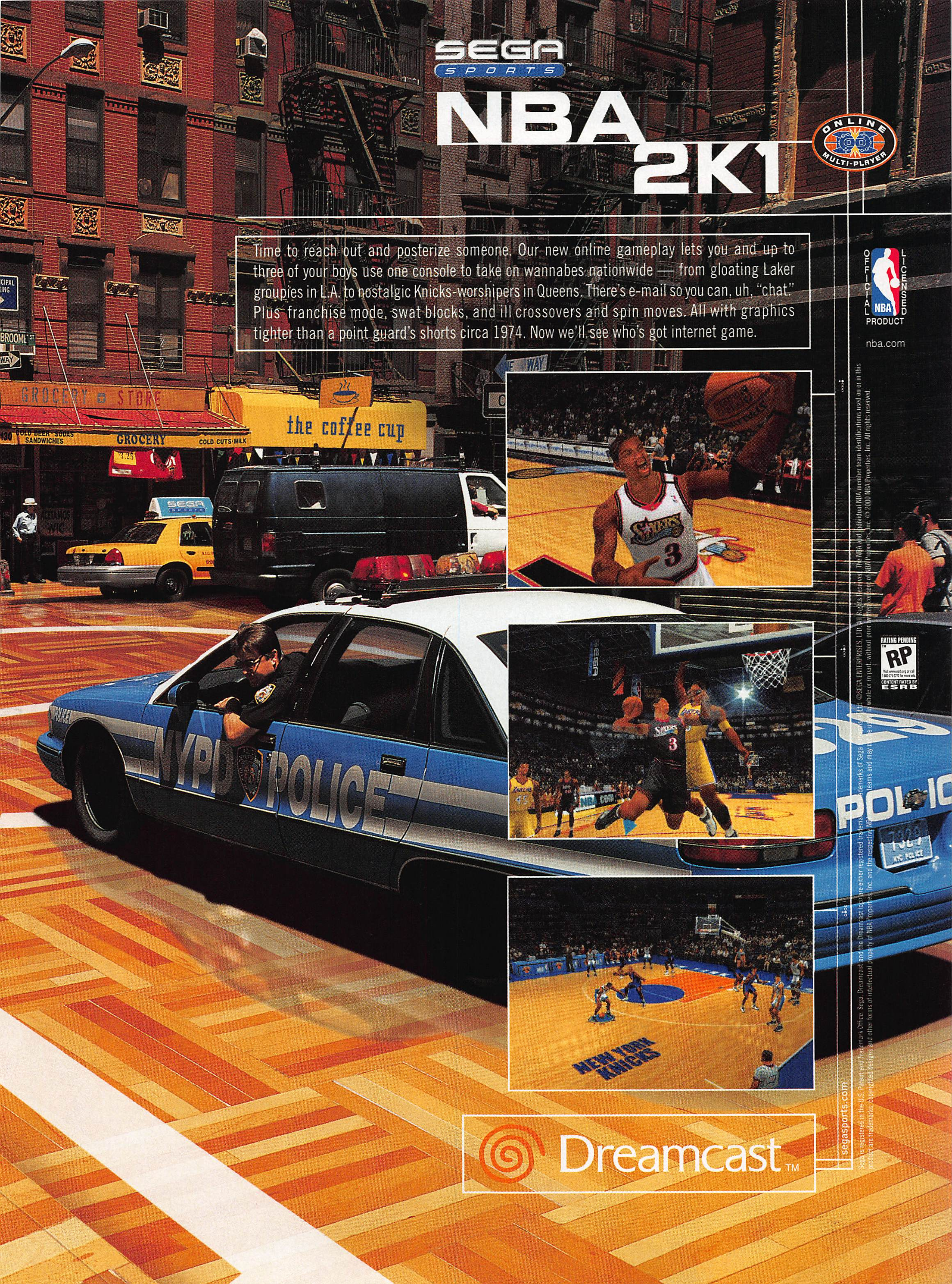


PlayStation
NCAA GAMEBREAKER 2001
989 SPORTS


TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Mild Language
Dreamcast
sega.com


Stopping is a bad idea.
In a world of angry cops, rival taggers and lots of paint, it's important to keep moving. It's a race against time to leave your mark on the sprawling urban environment. Armed with skates, a radio and varying quiver of spray paints, it's you against the world. But you'd better be quick because the price of self expression just got higher.
Featuring music by Rob Zombie, Jurassic 5 and Mix Master Mike.


THE COURT'S GOING TO BE A LITTLE WIDER THIS SEASON.
GROCERY


SEGA SPORTS
NBA 2K1
ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER
Time to reach out and posterize someone. Our new online gameplay lets you and up to three of your boys use one console to take on wannabes nationwide — from gloating Laker groupies in L.A. to nostalgic Knicks-worshipers in Queens. There's e-mail so you can, uh, "chat." Plus franchise mode, swat blocks, and ill crossovers and spin moves. All with graphics tighter than a point guard's shorts circa 1974. Now we'll see who's got internet game.
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Dreamcast™
segasports.com

EdZone



Through some intense psychological study (i.e. trolling the message boards, reading e-mail), I've come to the rather astute conclusion that people like to have their hands held; to be coddled and told 'I'm OK, you're OK' and 'Everything will be all right.' So I have a small quandary on my hands as does the rest of Team GameFan: Do we continue to be brutally honest, ignoring the fragile feelings (and sometimes egos, <snicker>) of competitors, advertisers (and on occasion) our readers, or do we continue to be, at all costs, honest, sincere and downright brutal when need be?

Some of the mail I've received thinks we're ogres, monsters, and "just plain rude," while others state that "though sometimes you come across too strong for me, I still appreciate it" all the way to "you guys rule, keep it up" all in relation to the tone of our unique brand of editorial. As far as our competitors that e-mail in with ruffled feathers goes, though, we don't care! You are competitors! That makes you the enemy, so save your breath cause we can't hear you... la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la, <covering ears>.

Now, the thing is, if we 'dumb' things down you're not getting the full truth, the whole truth, the absolute "I swear this is how I really feel" truth that many, many of you have come to know and love... and some have come to hate. So would you rather we went a little easier on games, the competition, etc. or would you rather know how we *really* feel? I know what I prefer: brutal and to-the-point honesty—anything else is simply sugar-coated treacle (which is precisely the point of view most of our advertiser-conscious competition subscribes too).

Would you rather have a magazine (or website) that clearly caters to what the advertiser wants or what a gamer wants? Should we be nicer in the interests of cultivating more advertising, thereby guaranteeing a higher page count month-in, month-out? Do we simply set ourselves on the corner and sell our editorial, our integrity to the highest bidder? What do you think?

No, I can assure you of one thing, whether you like it or not: we'll give you the most brutal, most honest, most sincere editorial of any gaming mag—period. And I include the foreign pubs in that assertion as well. We also promise to keep giving you the hard-hitting, in-your-face editorial style that's not watered down with the caveats or wishy-washy text that stifle so many other magazines, gaming or otherwise... we promise. And we won't coddle you, insult your intelligence or assume that you're anything less than the astute gamers that you are—after all, that's what you read GameFan for, right?

On a much more pleasant note, to say that the staff at GameFan is excited about the announcement of the Nintendo Game Cube might just be the understatement of the year: We were bouncing off the walls at the announcement. A **pure** game machine without any pretensions about being a 'household entertainment center'? Sign us up for palette right now! While this is a double-edged sword for Nintendo (though Matsushita will have a version with DVD playback capability—for more dollars, of course), we couldn't be happier to see that they're concentrating on what makes them, pound for pound, the best game developer on the planet. Heck, I had to get Fury up off the ground with a truckload of smelling salts after he heard the news that *Metroid* was finally making a return to the console world.

With a line-up that will (eventually) feature a new *Mario*, *Zelda* and *Metroid* game (not to mention a new *Smash Bros* and follow-ups to *Mario Golf* and *Tennis*), it's already clear that this will be a must-buy console for every GameFan reader, much as the Dreamcast has been for the past year—and this doesn't even take into account whatever original shockers Nintendo cobbles together. Shouldn't we see the games before making such a judgement? Have you ever played a Nintendo game? Do I even really need to answer this, except to say that where the big N's concerned, I'm willing to take this one on faith alone. Blind loyalty? No, probably something called impending reality...July (the import launch month) can't come fast enough—start saving your pennies and counting the days now.

Needless to say, the future is starting to look very bright again: Just hope that the world cares when it hits them square in the face come next October. And we haven't even seen the full, unbridled power of Microsoft's Xbox yet. You may think it's a PC in a box, but as always, it's **all** about the games.

Till Next Month...

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Eric Mylonas

Team GameFan

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

GameFan (USPS 014-907) (ISSN 1092-7212) Volume 8 Issue 10 October 2000. Published monthly by Shinno Media Corp. 6301 DeSoto Avenue Unit E, Woodland Hills, CA 91367. One year subscription (12 issues) is $23.99 (U.S.), $49.99 (Canadian), $69.99 (Foreign). Please remit in U.S. funds only. Please allow 60 days for your first issue. Periodicals Postage Paid at Woodland Hills, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address form to: GameFan, P.O. Box 630, Big Sandy, TX 75755-9811.

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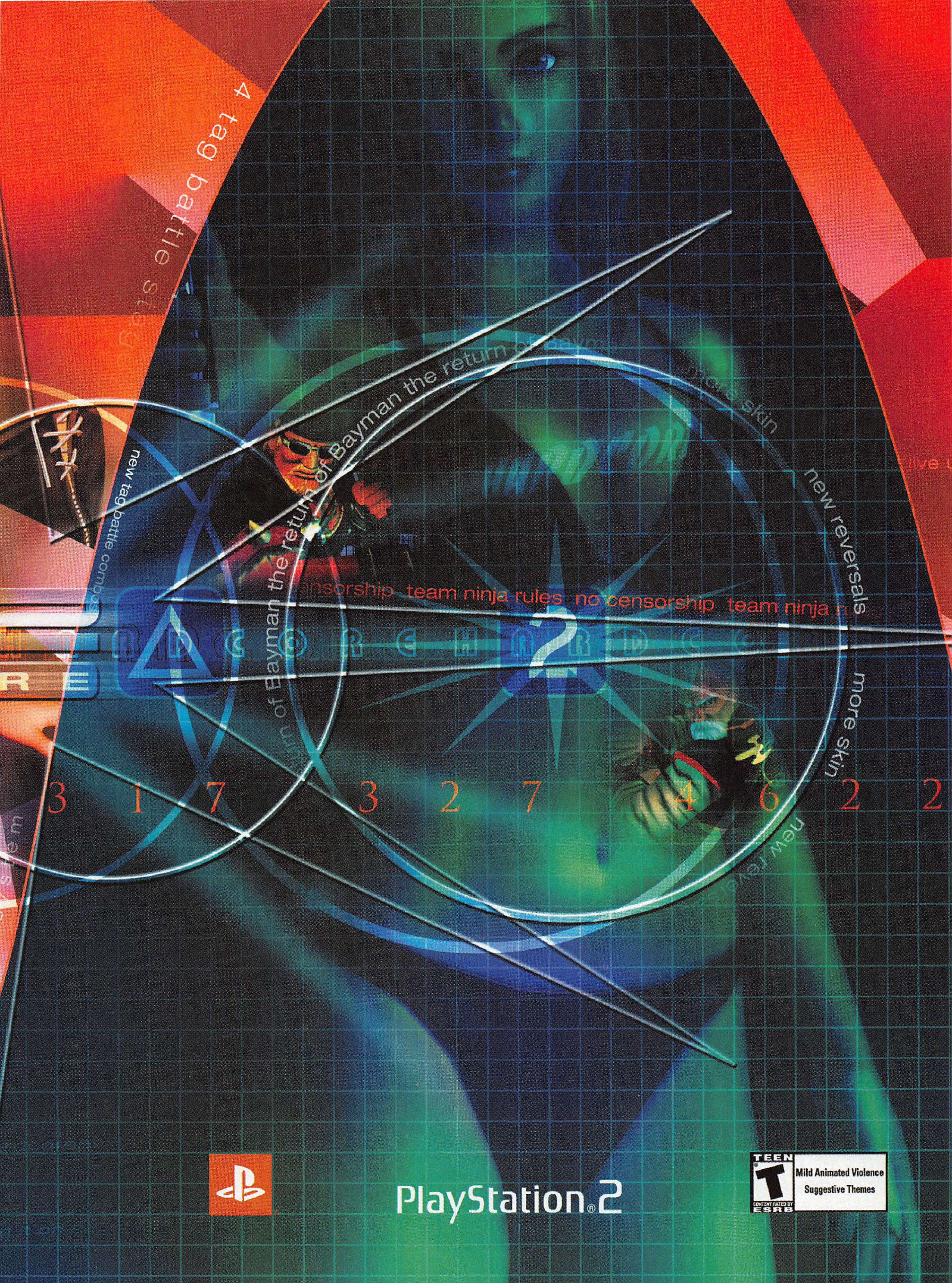

4 tag battle stages
the return of Bayman the return of Bayman the return of Bayman
more skin
new reversals
more skin
new reversals
new tagbattle combos
censorship team ninja rules no censorship team ninja rules
3 1 7 3 2 7 4 6 2 2
PlayStation 2
TEEN
Mild Animated Violence
Suggestive Themes
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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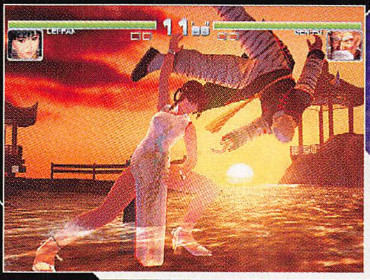
Looney Tunes Space Race Pg.48



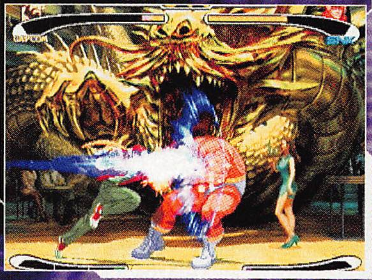
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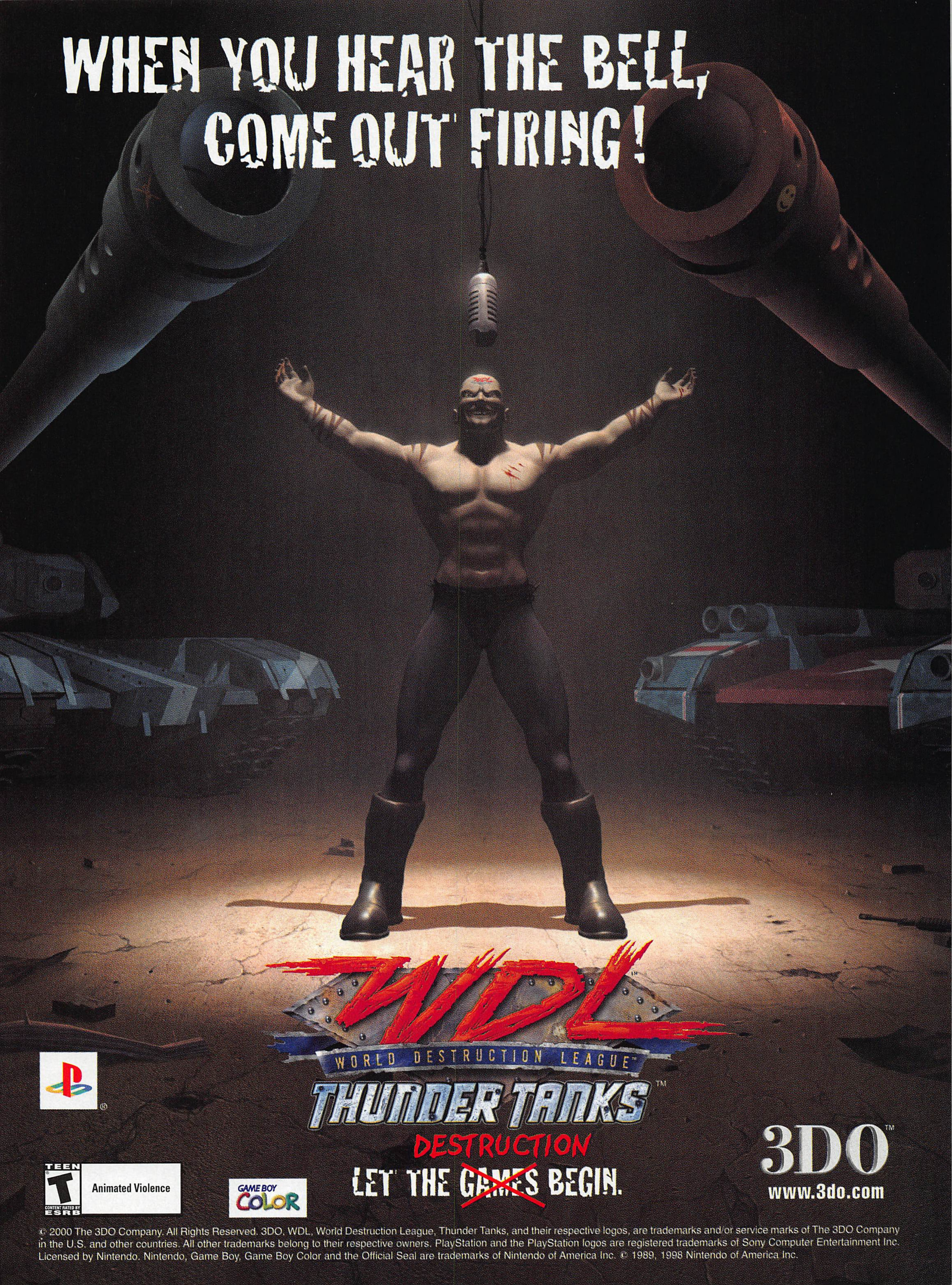
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Game Index


WHEN YOU HEAR THE BELL, COME OUT FIRING!
WDL
WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE
THUNDER TANKS
DESTRUCTION
LET THE GAMES BEGIN.
TEEN
Animated Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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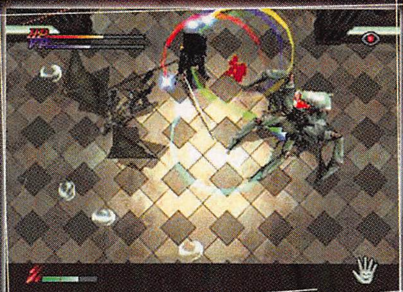
12090 a.d.

10,000 years have passed since the final war brought the history of the human race to its end. Since that time, vampires have reigned over the world. But now they are dying as a species–this is their final hour. The humans are regaining their power after many long dark years. However, some vampires remain in the remote region and continue their horrific attacks against humans. Such action has brought about the hiring of bounty hunters to destroy them. Among these hunters, the Dunpeals, half vampire and half human, are considered the finest. In time, people began to talk about a hunter with remarkable skills...

That hunter is D... Vampire Hunter D...

The adventure begins...







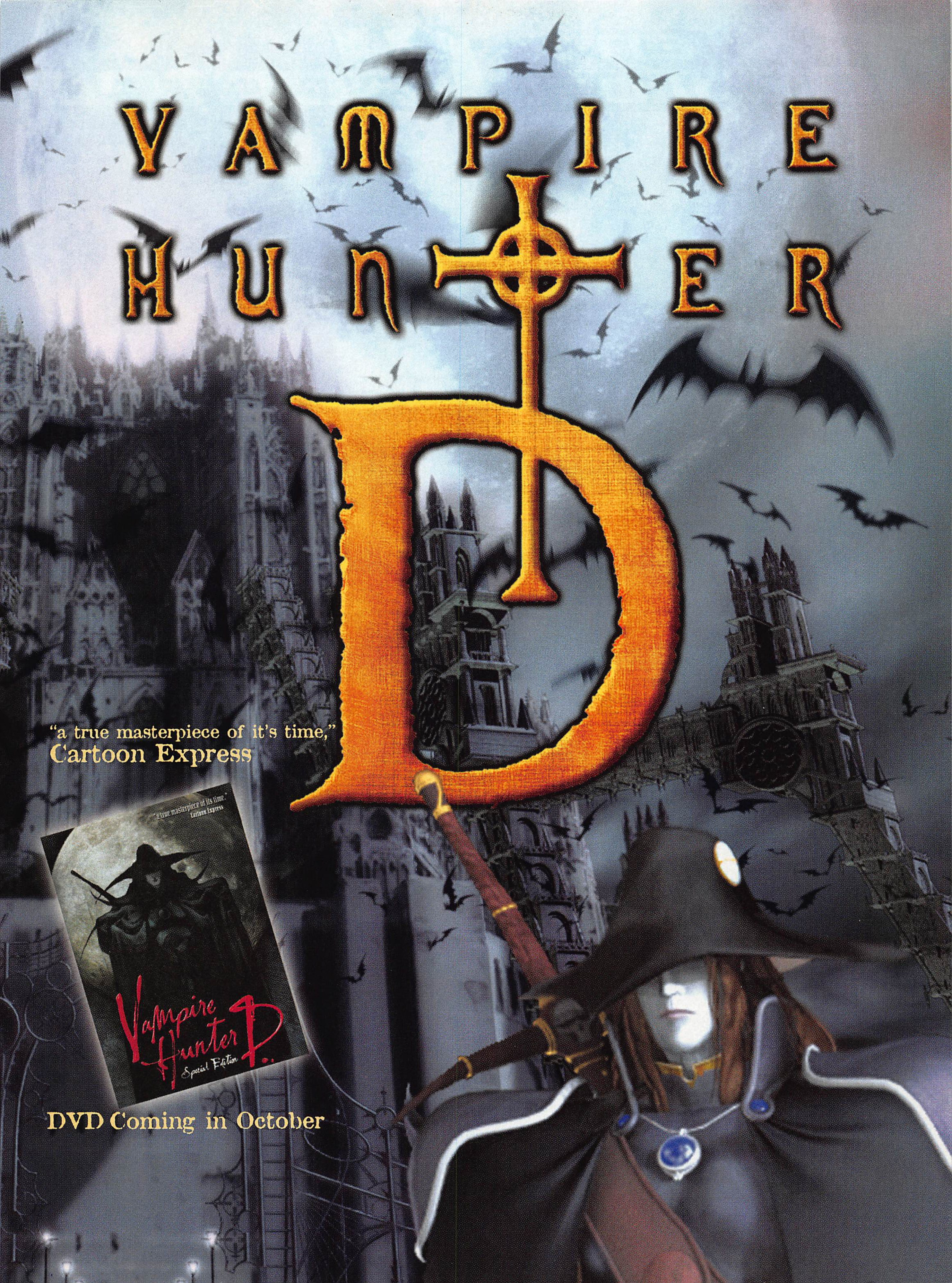
PlayStation

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Animated Blood
Animated Violence


VAMPIRE HUNTER D
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"a true masterpiece of its time."
Cartoon Express
Vampire Hunter D.
Special Edition
DVD Coming in October

Top Ten Most Wanted

Chrono Cross
Publisher: Square EA



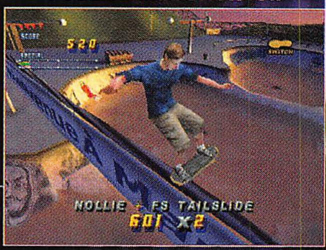
Reader's Top Ten

1) *Chrono Cross* - PS
2) *Spiderman* - PS
3) *Ecco the Dolphin: DotF* - DC
4) *Seaman* - DC
5) *Kirby 64* - N64
6) *UFC* - DC
7) *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* - PS
8) *Mario Tennis* - N64
9) *Legend of Dragoon* - PS
10) *Power Stone 2* - DC

Reader's Most Wanted

1) *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* - PS
2) *Zelda: Majora's Mask* - N64
3) *NFL 2K1* - DC
4) *Madden 2001* - PS2
5) *Metal Gear Solid 2* - PS2
6) *Parasite Eve 2* - DC
7) *Jet Grind Radio* - DC
8) *Gran Turismo 2000* - PS2
9) *Ogre Battle 64* - N64
10) *LoK: Soul Reaver 2* - PS2

Tony Hawk P.S. 2
Publisher: Activision



GameFan Editors' Most Wanted



- *Sin & Punishment* - N64
- *Sonic Adventure 2* - DC
- *Metal Gear Solid 2* - PS2
- *Gun Valkyrie* - DC
- *1944* - Arcade
- *Dragon Blaze* - Arcade
- *Phantasy Star Online* - DC
- *Silpheed* - PS2
- *Final Fantasy IX* - PS
- *Munch's Oddysee*- PS2

(In no particular order)

GameFan Editors' Top Ten



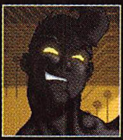
1) *Turok 3* - N64
2) *Ogre Battle 64* - N64
3) *The World Is Not Enough* - N64
4) *Power Stone 2* - DC
5) *Armored Core 2* - PS2
6) *Xtreme Sports* - DC
7) *Raiden Fighters Jet* - Arcade
8) *Mega Man 8* - Saturn
9) *Freefall 3050 AD* - Nuon
10) *Verytex*** - Mega Drive



1) *Dave Mira* - PS
2) *NFL 2K1* - DC
3) *Warlords Battlecry* - PC
4) *Everquest* - PC
5) *SSX* - PS2
6) *Mario Tennis* - N64
7) *Madden 2001* - PS2
8) *Virtua Tennis* - DC
9) *Baldur's Gate 2* - PC
10) *Space Race* - DC



1) *Diablo II* - PC
2) *Mario Tennis* - N64
3) *Strikers 1945** - Saturn
4) *Strikers 1945 II** - Saturn
5) *Mario Story** - N64
6) *Mars Matrix* - Arcade
7) *Chrono Cross* - PS
8) *UFC* - Game Boy Color
9) *Chess* - PC
10) *Fight Night* - C64



1) *Onimusha* - PS2
2) *Space Race* - DC
3) *The World Is Not Enough* - N64
4) *Dyanasty Warriors 2* - PS2
5) *Time Splitters* - PS2
6) *Panzer Zwei* - Saturn
7) *Capcom Vs. SNK* - DC
8) *Ferrari F355 Challenge* - DC
9) *Perfect Dark* - N64
10) *Strider 2* - PS



1) *Tekken Tag Tournament** - PS2
2) *Front Mission 3* - PS
3) *Jet Set Radio** - DC
4) *Cannon Spike* - DC
5) *Ridge Racer V* - PS2
6) *Armored Core 2* - PS2
7) *Mario Tennis* - N64
8) *Dino Crisis 2* - PS
9) *SSX* - PS2
10) *Grandia II** - DC

* Import Title

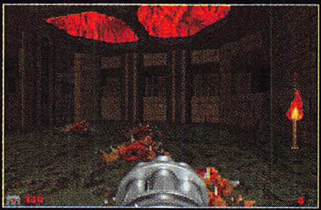
Developer's Top Ten

Mike Arkin: Executive Producer at Crave Entertainment

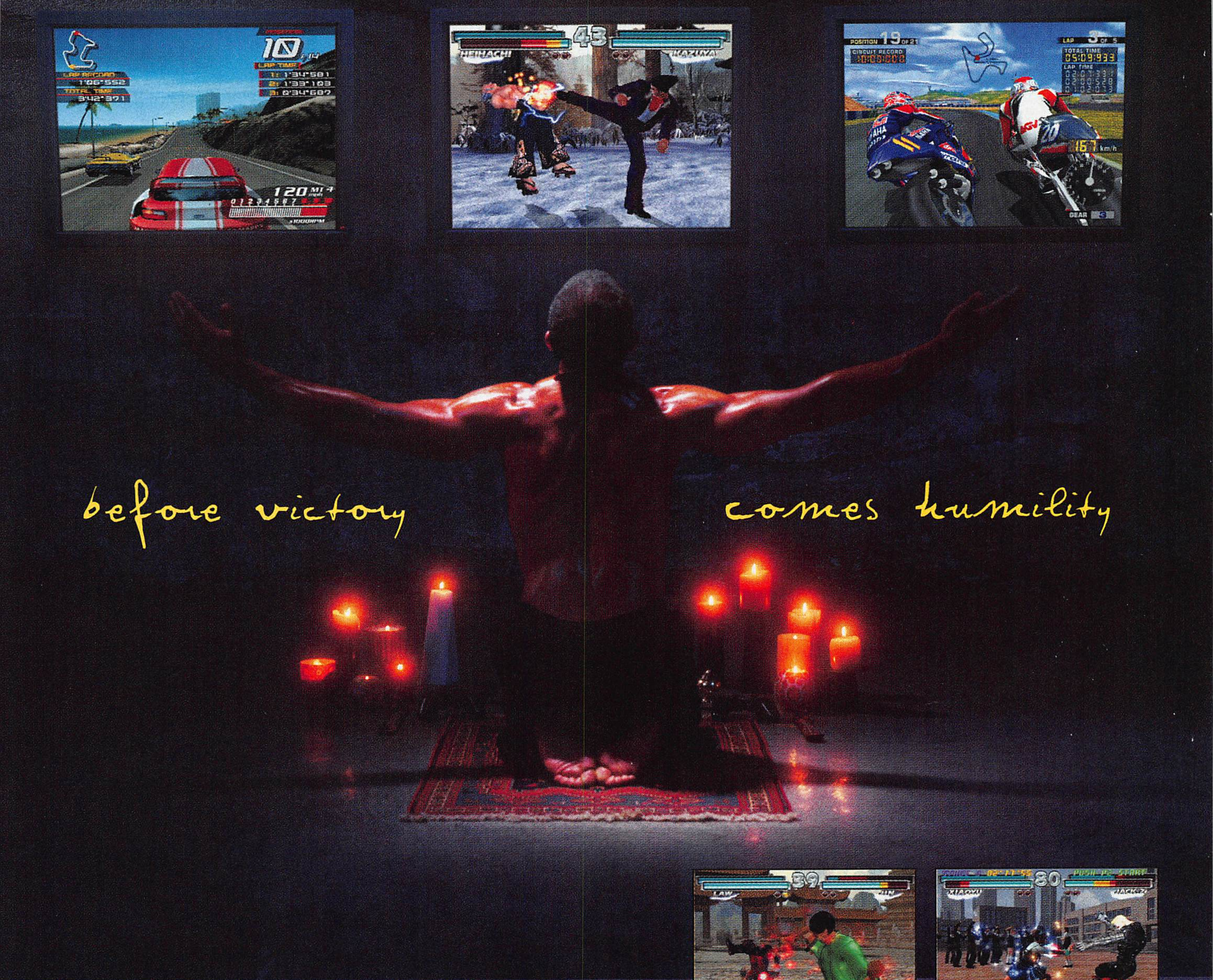
1. *Doom* - PC
2. *System Shock (the first one!)* - PC
3. *Gunhead (Blazing Lasers in the US)* - PC-Engine/Turbografx
4. *Ridge Racer series (especially Ridge Racer Revolution)* - PS
5. *Gunship 2000* - PC
6. *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe* - PC
7. *X-Wing* - PC
8. *Wasteland* - PC
9. *T2* - Arcade
10. *Super Mario World* - SNES

Doom: Developed & Published by Id Software





This was a hard list to make because I have been a hard core gamer for so long. *Doom* was an easy one though because there is no other game that I have invested so many hours in. It is truly one of the greatest games of all time. I still remember how creepy the voice of Shodan in *System Shock* was. *Gunhead* is one of the best shooters ever. The *Ridge Racer* series is one of the best balanced, most fun driving series. I'm still looking for a fun helicopter sim like *Gunship* and if I can get it running, I just might start playing it again. *SWOTL* had the best dynamic campaign of any flight sim ever and captivated me for months. What can I say about *X-Wing*? I grew up wanting to fly an X-wing fighter and Larry Holland finally gave me a chance... thanks Larry! *Wasteland* was the first RPG I ever played and the only one I ever finished. The *T2* arcade machine sat next to my desk at Acclaim and I would play it every day. And *Mario* probably deserves to be higher on this list. Still in my mind Miyamoto's best work, this baby was a great game!





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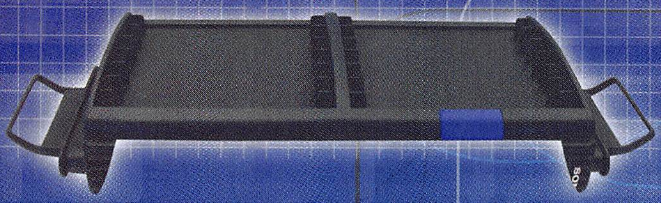
DVD Remote

PL-609



Featuring: **Controller Pass-Thru Port**

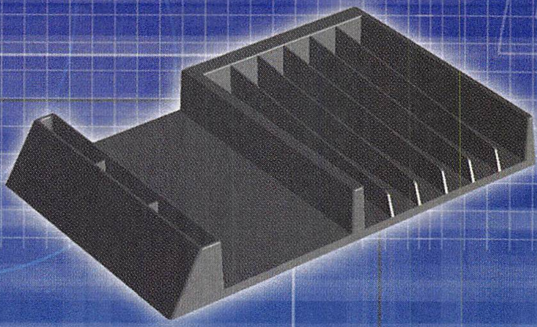
- Fully functional Wireless DVD Controller Allows Simultaneous Use Of PS2 Controller And DVD Remote
- Full Function Control For DVD Video, Music CDs & PS2 Games
- Stylized Comfort Design



PL-637

DVD/Controller Storage

- Cool design
- Holds up to 14 DVD cases and two PS2 controllers



PL-630

PlayStation® 2 Vertical Stand

- Saves Space
- Secures PS2 in it's vertical position



PL-636

DVD Replacement Case 3 Pack

- Replaces existing DVD and game cases
- Integrated memory card holder



PL-638

G-Grip 2

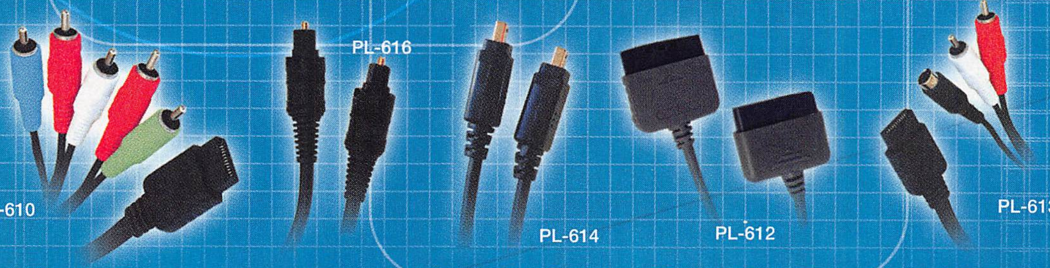
- Improves Tactile Feedback
- Enhanced Rubber Grip
- Added Comfort



PL-615

8 Meg Memory Card w/Case

- Case included
- Rubberized sides for better grip when removing



PL-610 Component Cable

PL-616 i -link

PL-614 Optical Video Cable

PL-612 Extension Cable 10Ft

PL-613 S-Video Cable

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• Rubberized Steering Grips
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HARD CARRYING CASE
• Great for rental stores
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• Great for travel
PL-620
PL-625
PL-611
DESIGNER RF SWITCH
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VERTICAL MULTI-TAP
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Editor Round-Up

Ever since Nintendo's Space World event in Japan, all the talk has centered on Game Cube. People are already taking sides, bashing or praising the console, the controller, the name, the tech demos shown. It's a really interesting time for the industry, with lots of opinionated folks out there, so we asked all our staff members what they thought of the GC and Game Boy Advance. Here's what they said.



ECM

Though normally typecast as a jaded gamer, ECM was uncharacteristically upbeat upon hearing of the GC and GBA. A long-time supporter of the N64, its games, and controller, ECM was quick to rally to the defense of the new system's wacky pad. "Sure you'll never be able to play *Street Fighter* on it," he said, "but just look at it!" Maybe he's just happy to see a console that matches his stature at last.

emylonas@gamefan.com



REUBUS

"Heinous" is the word Reubus uses to describe the Game Cube's controller. You don't even know where you're supposed to put your thumbs or how you're supposed to hold onto it. This statement comes from the guy who tosses items haphazardly in his cubicle (i.e., doesn't know where to put stuff), be it on his desk, the floor, or the back seat of his car. Now that's what I call "heinous..."

bstockert@gamefan.com



THE JUDGE

The Judge appreciates the minimalist design of the Game Cube and also admits he's intrigued by the Game Boy Advance. The controller, on the other hand, he is not a fan of. Apparently his wounds haven't healed completely from his many long and ardous battles with the N64 controller's analog stick... (you can guess who won that war). Funny, nobody else here seems to suffer from analog stick blues. Hmm...

ghiggins@gamefan.com



EGGO

Eggo is enamored with the tiny, compact design of the Game Cube and Game Boy Advance. Look! They're both so small, and they fit in the palm of your hand! You can pack it up and take it with you when you're on the go. Plus, those proprietary 3.5" DVDs are so cute! Eggo liking 'em small and cute? That's what we hear...

gngo@gamefan.com



FURY

Dude, it's awesome! Did you see those screens of *Metroid*? That's sweet! Dude, that shot of Luigi in the mansion... It's gonna rock! "But Fury, those aren't in-game shots. They're all CG." <pause> Dude, did you see that shot of all those little Marios? Man, that was incredible! And the design of that console is so... cute! Bra, it's gonna rule. Hey, you wanna go back to my place and check out the *Metal Gear 2* DVD?

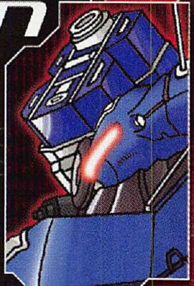
jweitzner@gamefan.com



KODOMO

Kodomo could care less about the arrival of the Game Cube. Unless it plays host to some of his most beloved series (*Tobal*, *Tekken*, or *Ridge Racer*), he sees no reason to get excited. We suspect he's also disinterested because there's no chance that it'll ever have 'adult' titles like the PS2. What, no Japanese chicks in schoolgirl outfits? Bleah!

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THE 6th MAN

The 6th Man has been a staunch supporter of Sony and the mighty PS2 regime since day 1. Despite that, he's at least shown interest in Nintendo's 128-bitter, and the Game Boy Advance is looking like a worthy successor. The Game Cube is compact and nearly portable (and chicks will love that nifty handle, which makes it look like a lunchbox). Best of all, it comes in a color which matches his hair and personality... pink.

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The Art Department



TAO

When he first saw the pictures of the Game Cube, Tao said, "Is that the new Mac computer?" Upon discovering what it truly was, he has adopted the Switzerland stance of remaining neutral. Not one to be impressed by mere tech demos, he's withholding judgement until seeing an actual game. In the meantime, he's planning his tactics for global domination in *Mario Kart* for Game Boy Advance.

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SKETCH

Sketch is pretty indifferent towards the Game Cube, not really taking a stance one way or the other. Unfortunately, that's not the only area of his life which is a little ambiguous. Let's just say that his alter ego "floats a few inches off the ground." <shudder> Don't even say it. We were wondering the exact same thing...

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PHOENIX

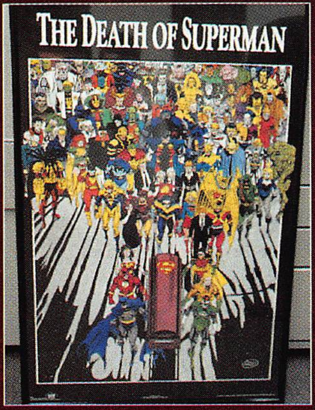
Phoenix can't wait to buy both the Game Cube and Game Boy Advance. Although he does say that the GC's controller "looks like it has cancer" (even we couldn't make this kinda stuff up). "Those lumps on the side look like a tumor or something." In the classic words of Kid Fan, doing his best Ahhnold Schwarzeneggar from *Kindergarten Cop* impression... "It's NOT a Too-MAH!"

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Productivity Killer of the Month

Height: 3'
Weight: 1.8 lb.
Blood Type: B-
Special Abilities: Separating the Men from the Nerds

In our conference room, this is one of the many posters hanging on the walls. It's been there ever since we moved in, but prior to this month, nobody has really paid any attention to it. Then the other day, all of us were put to The Test.

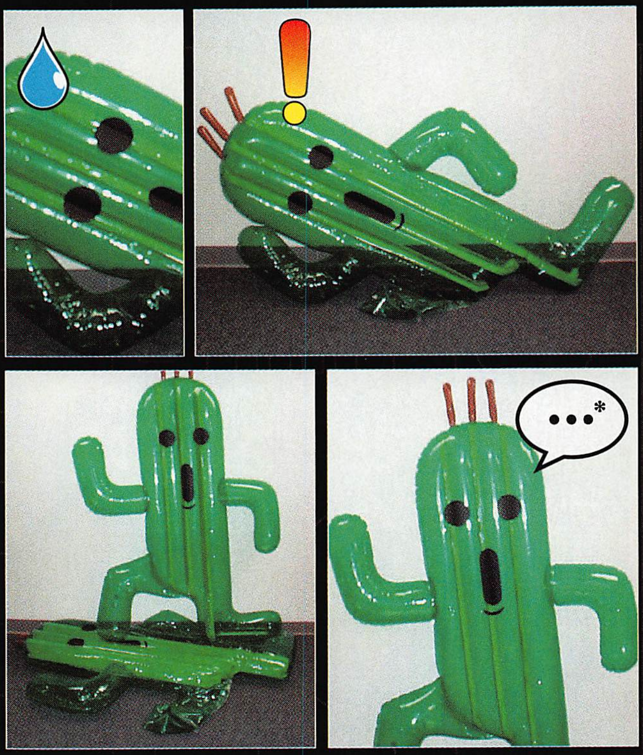


Other than the six people holding Superman's coffin, how many characters can you name in this picture? Despite having an office full of knowledgable gamers who you would assume knew something about comic books, many of us couldn't name more than five of 'the rest of those guys.'

Henceforth, it has been decreed that this will be a future interview question for prospective *GameFan* applicants. If you can relate stories of owning an M2, boast of owning an enormous Turbo Grafx collection, or tell us how you've been reading *GameFan* since Vol 1 Issue 1, it means nothing if you can't tell Darkseid from Martian Manhunter. Don't worry, if you can't tell Jimmy Olsen from Lobo, you're not the only one. A few of us were stumped by questions such as this:

ECM: See that guy with the blue beetle on his chest? Who is he?
Eggo: Uhh... I dunno.
ECM: Blue Beetle.
Eggo: Man, I knew that!
So study up, future applicants. You have been warned! And we're not falling for that "But I used to read only Marvel..." excuse either!

GameFan's Box·O·Fun



*** Translation: There can be only one!**

Chicken of the Month

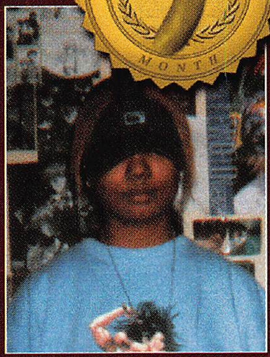
Recently, Tecmo was kind enough to send us a couple collector's edition mounted phone card of Lei Fang from *Dead or Alive 2*. The one shown here is No. 1068. We're not sure how big the print run was on these, but it must be small because we were told these cool desktop ornaments are worth over $1,000! <faints> (ECM's Note: we didn't want to break Eggo's heart after he wrote such an amusing piece of prose by telling him that they're actually worth a measly 50 bones... so just imagine they're worth $1000–that'll make Eggo feel better).

Wow, can you imagine that? Think of the advertising copy you'd have to come up with if you were to sell one of these on a late night infomercial. "Normally, these things retail for $5,000, but today, if you call right now... we'll sell you a special collector's edition Tecmo phone card for the ultra low price of... $2,000!! <whispers> Wh, what? We can't do that! I've just been told that for a limited time, we're going to offer an extra special deal to the first 10,000 callers. We'll sell you this aerodynamic, sleek, conversation starter at HALF PRICE... for the rock bottom price of $1,000! Damn, you're taking food out of my childrens' mouths at that price. Call now! Supplies are limited."



Sausage of the Month

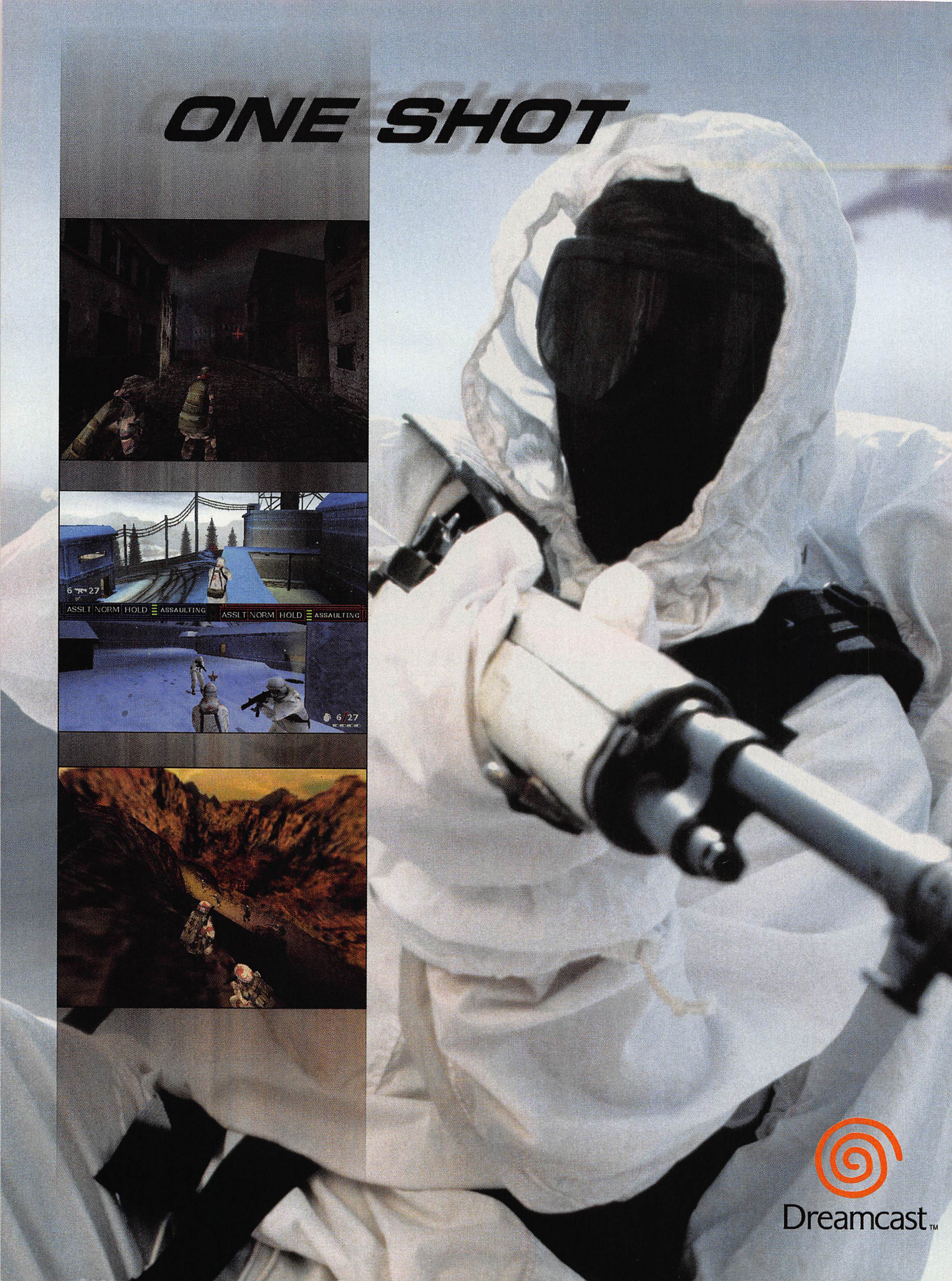
It was a particularly tough decision selecting our Sausage of the Month this issue, as many of the candidates were highly qualified, but in the end, we present our award to Irania Colon, an 18 year old girl gamer from Staten Island. Gaming since the Atari days, she nostalgically recalls classics across many platforms including *Kaboom*, *Shadowgate* (no, not the N64 one), *Super Metroid*, and **the** Square RPGs (we trust you know which ones we're talking about).





Anyone who does a "happy dance" on Christmas morning upon seeing a brand new SNES or whose career goal is to be an anime artist deserves special mention. Even her self-portrait cartoon character looks like it belongs in *Jet Grind Radio*.

If you want to join the esteemed ranks of *GameFan*'s Sausages of the Month, send your picture and hard-core account into Posty's mailing address, and we'll immortalize you in *GF*!


ONE SHOT
ASSLT NORM HOLD ASSAULTING
ASSLT NORM HOLD ASSAULTING
Dreamcast


ONE KILL!
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ROGUE SPEAR™
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• POWERFUL WEAPONS ARSENAL
• 10 NEW PLAYABLE CHARACTERS
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PIPE DREAM

Viewpoint

G / Graphics
C / Control
P / Play Mechanics
M / Music
O / Originality

ECM Eggo Fury Kodomo





Game of the Month
Ogre Battle 64



Ferrari F355 Challenge
Dreamcast
Acclaim
Racing
Fury's Score: 92
Reviewed pg. 70

Someone has to stop Yu Suzuki. While you may sometimes question the gameplay in his titles (this goes out to all you *VF3* haters) you have to admit that his games get the job done graphically and *Ferrari* is simply in a league of its own. It gets old, but every month seems to bring a new high water mark in graphics and Suzuki-san is always at the leading edge of that wave. It's too bad that the game is merely a super-sim, and not an ultra-tight arcade racer. I can appreciate what he was striving for, but it's not my cup o' tea. Better than *Sega GT*, though.

G 10 · C 9 · P 5 · M 9 · O 6 — **77**

The skill police tried this one, and broke down before they left the gate. This is as close to the arcade version as you're ever gonna get, but one word of warning: This is sim territory and, before you buy this game, you had better understand what that means. Ultra realistic handling and physics that will take some getting used to. Call it the Anti-*Ridge Racer V*, as there are NO powerslides, but *F355* will make a hard-core gamer out of you yet, with sensational graphics and mind-numbingly hard gameplay. Suzuki's finest; buy it now.

G 10 · C 9 · P 10 · M 7 · O 8 — **92**

Looks great... less filling. I was never a fan of *Ferrari* in arcades. It was just **too** realistic. Many months later, we're offered a home port, and my reaction is much the same. This is one of the best looking racing games to date, but I don't have the patience or desire to master the intricacies of *Ferrari*'s sim-y controls. C'mon, any game which offers automatic braking—yet you still slam into walls—has got problems in my book. I'll take the fast speed, tight control, and fun gameplay of *Ridge Racer V* or even *Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2* over this exercise in futility. <yawn>

G 10 · C 6 · P 5 · M 7 · O 9 — **71**



Worms Pinball
Dreamcast
Infogrames
Pinball

I love pinball; I love *Worms*; I do not love *Worms Pinball*. Allow me to explain: If you're going to make a pinball game on a console system, make sure that it does things you simply cannot do in a real pinball machine. Sadly, Team 17 seems to have ignored that cardinal rule and at their own peril. Sadly, they don't take advantage of what a video game can do: bizarre locales; myriad sub-levels; scrolling playfields (*Devil's Crush* anyone?!)—like sports games, if I want to play the real thing, I'll go do it at an arcade, not via a hackjob console pin.

G 6 · C 5 · P 4 · M 5 · O 2 — **39**

Unlike most of the GameFan staff, *Worms* played no part of my life... and it never will! And guess what? Neither will *Worms Pinball*. The problem here is that in order for a home console pinball game to be good, it has to be crazy (at least doing things that a real life pinball machine can't) and *WP* is the polar opposite of that. Basically, it mimics an actual pinball machine and—as is the case with most real pinball machines—things get repetitious and old quickly. I'm not trying to jump on the bandwagon here, but if you can find a copy of *Devil's Crush*, take it.

G 8 · C 7 · P 5 · M 6 · O 5 — **61**

Tonight on Channel 11... "When video game pinball goes WRONG!" See! The horrors that lurk when *GameFan* favorite *Worms* developer Team 17 makes a game that even Mommy would be ashamed of. Wince! At the simplicity of this pinball machine layout. Yawn! As the game tests your threshold for pain with the dullest, most monotonous gameplay around. Watch! The awesome *Worms* license go up in flames. Witness! The creators of good pinball games like *Devil's Crush* roll over in their imaginary graves upon seeing the horror of *Worms Pinball*!

G 8 · C 7 · P 4 · M 7 · O 7 — **45**



Armored Core 2
PlayStation 2
Agetec
Adventure
Kodomo's Score: 88
Reviewed pg. 34

Oh god yes! I loved the *AC* games on PlayStation and now I love *AC2* on PS2—doesn't hurt that it's also just about the only PS2 game thus far that I'm truly happy with. Sure it's nothing more than the PS game all hopped up on steroids, but why would From mess with a good thing? Minus some control issues (still no dual analog support, argh), the graphics are impressive and there's now enough extra parts to customize your mech with that you may never leave the house. Add in some intense mission objectives, solid sound and you've got one reason to buy a PS2.

G 8 · C 8 · P 10 · M 8 · O 6 — **92**

During the 32 bit era, I was never much of an *Armored Core* fan (instead I was infatuated with *Virtual On*). But these days, with the modest amount of triple A PS2 games available, I'll give almost anything a real go. What I've found here, is that *AC2* is HEAVY on mech-tailoring, and that spells disaster if you're looking for immediate action. There are truly so many facets involved in the customization process that it can come off a bit daunting—and victory is not at all realistic if you've got stock parts. Still, it doesn't hurt to be a bit in the dark when things look this good.

G 8 · C 7 · P 8 · M 8 · O 7 — **89**

Armored Core is one of those series like *Tomb Raider* which I always tell myself, "Don't look at it, and maybe it'll go away..." but it never does. Although I love the fantastic dogfights available in a fast-paced mech game like *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, *Armored Core* has always frustrated me with its clunky control and sketchy, shallow gameplay. The first PS2 offering of the series offers more-of-the-same style play with updated graphics, but the fun in stomping around slowly or flying with your jetpack still manages to elude me. Go figure.

G 7 · C 5 · P 6 · M 6 · O 5 — **68**

Love *Berserk*? Then you'll think *DW2* is the greatest thing since Kodomo learned the virtues of floss. For the rest of us (those of us that appreciate good oral hygiene), it's a mindless, soulless hack-'n-slash that you'll weary of within the first hour of play. Oh sure, at first it's fun: You're runnin' around cutting down hundreds upon hundreds of sword-toting thugs, but when you pause and think about it for a second, there's really no meat here. Fairly unimpressive graphics contribute to a very boring experience. Nice engine, though...

G 7 · C 7 · P 4 · M 5 · O 6 — **70**

What can I say? I hated the 2-hour button mashing experience that was *Berserk*, and I hate this game. Koei does get points for the sheer amount of characters, both onscreen and total, but when you consider that most are the same models, it becomes less impressive than you might think. Sure, I'm jaded, but when the entirety of a game consists of "mash buttons, kill enemies, repeat", I lose interest faster than ECM at a Sony convention. It's not a horrible game, but as shallow as they come. Funny, I don't remember *Braveheart* being this repetitive...

G 8 · C 3 · P 5 · M 8 · O 7 — **72**

Diary of a *Dynasty Warriors 2* owner... Day One: Dude, this game is shweet! Look at all those guys! I can ride into battle, chopping down enemies like so much chaff. I love it! Day Two: 2,972,463 bodies later... I love it. The bad guys keep coming... Still haven't found a reason to keep playing, but <yawn> I know it's in here. Feel the power of the PS2, baby. Day Three: Damn. Where did I put my copy of *Dragon Force*? What about *Streets of Rage 2*? I need a fix of story or gameplay before I take a sword to that clerk at EB... Hmmm... <sharpens weapon>.

G 8 · C 8 · P 6 · M 8 · O 9 — **83**



Dynasty Warriors 2
PlayStation 2
Koei
Action
Fury's Score: 89
Reviewed pg. 88

Yes, the speed is nice. Yes, it does look decent. Yes, it has some cool extras (Pac-Man and co.). And yes, it's still *Ridge Racer*... only not as good. Listen, I didn't like this when it came out on import, and now some seven months later it has done little to grow in my estimation. There's still the aliasing issues on the track (makes it hard to anticipate turns) and it still isn't as fast as *Rage Racer* on PS One. The sad fact of the matter is that this game has more in common with the very first *RR* game than the later chapters in the saga, and that's inexcusable. A solid 'pass.'

G 9 · C 7 · P 7 · M 8 · O 0 — **78**

The closest thing to *RRV* on Dreamcast is *Ferrari F355* with its killer frame rate and awesome car models. But it (and nearly every other home racer) lacks the speed Namco has injected in this latest *RR*. This is really what I envisioned for a next gen racer—something that runs so fast that you'll wonder if you can keep up with the pace. The car models are certainly impressive as well and the track-side detail rivals *Sega GT*. The shimmering is a bit of a nuisance, but its easy to look over when the game moves so fast. But why get rid of Reiko?

G 9 · C 9 · P 8 · M 9 · O 7 — **94**

This and *Madden* are the two best reasons to own a PS2. Namco has taken the classic *Ridge Racer* formula and blown the doors off it with a mind-numbing injection of 60 fps action. Considering *Ridge Racer* was already fast to begin with, you combine great graphics with awesome control, and the end result is the best console racing game ever. The only thing missing is the option to listen to your own music CDs like you could in *Ridge Racer*. Considering *Gran Turismo 2000* isn't even showing up on radar any more, this is the racing game to own.

G 9 · C 9 · P 9 · M 9 · O 4 — **92**



Ridge Racer V
PlayStation 2
Namco
Racing
Kodomo's Score: 92
Reviewed pg. 90

You know what? I don't like snowboarding games, but I was fully prepared to get past that after playing *SSX* at E3... too bad the final didn't live up to my expectations. Graphically, it's a very pretty game marred by an inconsistent frame rate—if you can't get a constant 60, lock it at 30, people (thank you Melbourne House). The presentation is also top-notch (and you would expect anything less from EA?). Thing is, the game isn't much fun. The tricks are cool, and some of the sound effects utterly amazing, but the actual racing falls a few notches short. Maybe next year?

G 9 · C 7 · P 6 · M 6 · O 7 — **79**

I have for years, proclaimed *1080°* to be the best snowboarding game on a home console. And while *SSX* might not be considered real snowboarding (sim freaks need not apply), it is definitely every bit as fun as *1080°*! We're talking massive courses, unbelievably simple trick setups and the kind of crisp visuals you'd expect in a PS2 game. EA needs to clone the team responsible because *SSX* is about a million times better than its brethren, *X Squad*. If EA delivers more games on the level of *SSX*, they might again see the kind of success they had with the PlayStation.

G 9 · C 8 · P 8 · M 6 · O 7 — **91**

What the-? 2 EA games in one month that are top notch? File this one under Amazing But True. The Judge hits the nail on the head, *SSX* won't bring anything new to the table, but it's still a top notch game. The levels seem to run on forever, move at an amazing pace and can be fully explored. I also liked the tricks-for-boost system (though it isn't innovative). Graphically, high poly characters abound. Quite simply, this was the most addictive game I came across this month and a must-buy for anyone willing to part with the 300 bones and get a PS2.

G 10 · C 9 · P 10 · M 10 · O 7 — **95**



SSX
PlayStation 2
Electronic Arts
Racing
Judge's Score: 94
Reviewed pg. 100

This game is poor, there's no question about it. The gameplay (squad-based and real-time) is neat and reminds me of the venerable *Space Hulk*, but the strategy definitely takes a back seat to the action, which is unfortunate. One glaring flaw, though, is the use of polys: They were striving for such hi-count character models that they sacrificed background complexity. And in a day and age when games like *Quake 3* with their lushly curved environs (hey, Sony said you can do curved surfaces in real time, right?), that's a big no-no. Next, please.

G 8 · C 6 · P 4 · M 7 · O 9 — **65**

While most of the other guy's will tell you this game is as fun as talking to Eggo on a *Diablo II* binge, I must admit it was moderately fun. The character models are up there with the best I've seen (*TTT* 10,000 poly style), and even breathe realistically. Unfortunately, the game is just too easy early on, and too damn hard later in the game. While I applaud the effects and ability to buy items/weapons with points, most of the areas do seem to lack innovation and variety. Still, give it a go for a weekend, and you might see something worth the game time.

G 8 · C 7 · P 8 · M 6 · O 8 — **82**

You ever meet somebody who had potential to go places and be a winner, but didn't have the motivation to go the extra mile? That's what *X-Squad* is. A decidedly average action game that underachieves in every aspect. What promise there is with the cool characters and decent graphics is wasted on a startlingly basic action game that never aspires to entertain for more than five minutes. *Syphon Filter* had fun going for it, *Metal Gear* had intrigue and a story line, *X-Squad*... well, I wouldn't be surprised to see this game working at McDonalds.

G 8 · C 8 · P 6 · M 7 · O 8 — **77**



X-Squad
PlayStation 2
Electronic Arts
Action
Fury's Score: 80
Reviewed pg. 92



Alien Resurrection
PlayStation
Fox
First Person Shooter
Kodomo's Score: 81
Reviewed pg. 95

What was shaping up to be the be-all, end-all of PS FPS' turns out to be only sorta decent. I was a huge fan of *Alien Trilogy*, and unfortunately, though the game looks better, it isn't as fun to play (and it can't even touch the soaring heights of *AVP* on Jaguar). A very solid engine but painfully repetitive gameplay coupled to a design that says "Hey, *Resident Evil* never gives them enough ammo, that's a great idea!" Let's see a big hunt without TONS of ammo... no, I don't think so. Still, it's fun for a while, and better yet, it's not a cakewalk.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 — **85**

We often joke around the office that *Alien Resurrection* (the film) was so bad that it actually makes *Alien 3* seem like a decent flick. So why would Fox want to toss money into a game that's based on theatrical garbage? Let's face it, battling alien scum in the far regions of space is a winning formula, and especially for a FPS. Unfortunately, the PS is not the best console to realize this. The graphics in *AR* are way too muddy and thanks to the non-existent map, I'm wandering the hallways lost and frustrated. I'm going back to *Alien 3* on SNES!

G 6 | C 8 | P 7 | M 6 | O 7 — **78**

What is with the Morning After Pill in *AR*? Wake up next to a facehugger after a crazy night of drinking at the bar? No problem, just use this handy do-it-yourself kit, and within seconds it'll remove all parasite eggs from your system. Funny, I don't remember that in the movie... As far as PS FPS' go, *Alien Resurrection* is a decent—but not exceptional—game. The difficulty borders on tediously painful, as there never seems to be enough ammo to get the job done. Although I prefer the theme of *Aliens* more, I'd rather play *Medal of Honor 2* on my PS.

G 7 | C 7 | P 7 | M 7 | O 7 — **73**



Bomberman Party
PlayStation
Vatical
Party

This is for the hardcore BM players ONLY: Someone at Hudsonsoft clearly hates me. After all, who would mess with classic *Bomberman*? Instead of starting the players on the periphery of the screen, you start in the MIDDLE (of the basic map which is the only map h-core *BM* players play)!!! That means most matches last all of 30 seconds—which in my eyes, is too long for this game. I honestly can't believe someone took a look at this and said, "Yeah, that's a great idea!" Another classic crucified in the name of doing something different—rock on, morons.

G 5 | C 8 | P 1 | M 6 | O 5 — **25**

Hey look, it's Bomberman again, and roughly the same game that I played one countless systems in years gone by. As always, this is a great party game that, with multi-tap, will make for some fun gaming parties (I'm still recovering from the last alcohol-fueled *Mario Tennis* binge at ECM's pad...), but don't expect ANY refinement of the proverbial wheel here. Yes, if you've seen it, played it or owned it, you don't have one single reason to buy this game. Come on, Hudson, this one trick pony needs to get some amigos fast, or be sent to the glue factory.

G 6 | C 6 | P 8 | M 5 | O 0 — **69**

After years of begging Hudson to do a "real *Bomberman*" game with the classic perspective and 2D gameplay, we finally get our wish... sort of. *Bomberman Party Edition* gives us the classic *Bomberman* formula, but it also gives us additional headaches with loading time and ridiculous starting position on the main map (everyone starts in the center). The other maps, however, are unaffected. I'd still recommend Saturn *Bomberman* or *Super Bomberman 2* on SNES over this, but *Bomberman Party Edition* remains the best PS *Bomberman*.

G 5 | C 7 | P 8 | M 6 | O 3 — **82**



Dino Crisis 2
PlayStation
Capcom
Adventure
Kodomo's Score: 86
Reviewed pg. 96

I'm with Fury on this one: making *Dino Crisis 2* an even more action-oriented romp than the first one was a great idea. Thankfully, this further distinguishes *DC* as being nothing more than an *RE* clone (it's still a clone, but now it's got a twist). While I don't like the return to pre-rendered backdrops (does that make any sense? Sorta like doing a PS2 game with pre-rendered bgs after *RE:CV*... oh wait), I do very much like the run-and-gun, dino-destroying action. Now hopefully all will be right with the world when *DC3* hits PS2... with 3D backdrops.

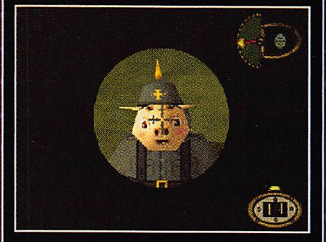
G 7 | C 7 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 — **89**

Has Capcom been reading my thoughts? While I thoroughly enjoyed the original *Dino Crisis*, I really spent the majority of the game in anticipation of my next run in with some prehistoric baddies. Blasting dinos is addicting, and any chance I can get to drill a T-Rex with lead, I'll take. Luckily, Capcom was able to hone in on this aspect of the game and crafted *DC2* accordingly. Puzzles have been reduced to switch flipping with the emphasis on executing raptors and other beasts. And I must admit, the pre-rendered backdrops make the game all that much better looking.

G 8 | C 7 | P 8 | M 7 | O 6 — **88**

I don't mind the return of pre-rendered backgrounds from the polygonal ones of the original *DC*. It gives the game more of an RE feel, which is a good thing. The emphasis in *DC2* is definitely on action, as the dinosaurs come leaping at you from every corner of the screen. You'd think your mission was to put them back into extinction one shotgun blast at a time. I just have a problem with "Why am I doing this?" The gratuitous violence with no compelling story puts me off, though. If you just want to shoot things, give it a try. I prefer a bit more substance.

G 8 | C 7 | P 7 | M 8 | O 7 — **82**



Hogs of War
PlayStation
Infogrames
Strategy

I think the old saying goes: If I want to play Worms, I'll play bloody Worms! HOW is Worms, down to the turn-based, trajectory-important gameplay... minus one key element--it's missing that charm only Worms can deliver (could it be? 2D is a better medium than 3D in this case?). Team 17 must be terribly flattered, however, as this is an admirable attempt at brining that classic into 3D. All the turn-based excitement of Worms can be yours, but I do have to ask that if given the choice why anyone would choose this over the originator.

G 6 | C 7 | P 7 | M 7 | O 4 — **71**

Straight up, HOW bites on Worms Armageddon more than I thought possible. Okay, so the landscape is 3D, but make no mistake about it, from the gameplay to the weapons and aiming system, you've seen it before. That said, HOW is fun and if your looking for a pleasant diversion from Worm Net, this will more than fill in nicely. If you have to go for strategy, buy Worms, but HOW is a close second and the addition of Area Specialization (sniper!) and various missions (defend, go through trenches, etc) make it a good rental PS title.

G 7 | C 8 | P 9 | M 7 | O 6 — **84**

Mission Debriefing: 0600 hours. Your job is to infiltrate this highly guarded, intelligence facility. It'll take a crack squad of strategy game lovers to pull this mission off without a hitch. Your men will have to be skilled in the arts of weaponry. Aiming rocket launchers, tossing grenades, calculating trajectory... Be careful. The enemy is armed with European humor and their sharp tongues have been known to leave men in stitches. Intelligence also informs us that the enemy takes after our favorite commandos, *Team Worms Armageddon*. Dismissed.

G 5 | C 6 | P 9 | M 8 | O 8 — **85**

I wasn't a huge fan of the first, despite its obvious charms (when is killing Nazis not fun—now that I think of it, if every game featured Nazis as enemies, would there even be a 'violent video games' debate?) but *MoH2* is definitely a step up. A very solid engine (especially so on PS), and gameplay that rivals most console FPSs across the board—though Eggo is crazy if he thinks it's better than *Turok 3* (it is better than *Perfect Dark*, however). The best part though? The little details set this game apart from the pack with the kind of attention that every game should have.

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 8 — **89**

Finally, I get World War II as a backdrop and best of all, it's not in some strategy game (read *Daisen Riyaku* on DC). But have things really changed in this Metal Of Honor sequel? Playing as a member of the French Resistance, you're still after a bit of Nazi blood but this time around—you play as a girl (what a twist!) Seriously though, while *MoH: Underground* (like its predecessor) is the best console WWII FPS to date, what we have here is more of an expansion pack than anything else—same graphics, same enemy, but new locales and missions. Hitler and Eva... I'm coming.

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 8 — **88**

The first *MoH* came out of nowhere and knocked everyone's socks off. The sequel does more of the same with intricate little details which make you go 'wow.' Something as simple as shooting a lock off a door when you don't have a key... that's something that most FPSs don't give you the option to do, instead opting for the tried and true "You found the blue key" formula. *MoH2* is wacky, has personality, and is, most importantly, fun. I'd rather play this than *Turok 3, Perfect Dark*, or any of the current PS2 FPSs. Low on graphics, high on gameplay.

G 7 C 8 P 9 M 8 O 8 — **89**



Medal of Honor 2
PlayStation
Electronic Arts
First Person Shooter
Kodomo's Score: 83
Reviewed pg. 94

I don't know the two fellows to my right: apparently Jim Henson wronged their families some time in the distant past as *MRM* is fun! It has a wonderful engine, bitchin' Muppet characters (bet ya never heard that adjective used to describe the Muppets, eh?), and solid gameplay with tons of secret characters, vehicles and maps. While I don't generally get very excited about kart racing games anymore, I'm actually happy to see that this game got made and it's worth at least a passing glance if you love kart racing and the Muppets. Can I get a Rainbow Connection?

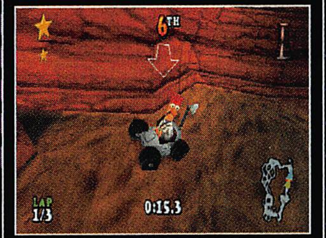
G 8 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 7 — **84**

Poor Jim, we really needed ya here buddy <to prevent your beloved Muppets from starring in a horrid kart racer>. Oh well, it's too late and in Jim's case, it's probably better he's not around to see this. Ok, do I start with the busted camera or the awful level design? Well, I suppose I'll get right to the camera which is the most noticeable issue in the game. It has a tendency to slide around at such a frenetic pace that following the action is quite painful. But then on to more pain: the stages. Witness as the textures give way to SEVERE draw in—U-G-L-Y spells...

G 5 C 3 P 3 M 6 O 4 — **54**

Sweet merciful Buddha on a crutch! What in the name of all that ISN'T holy is this? Well, take away the Muppet license and you've got the biggest sham in made up character history since John K. got booted from *Ren and Stimpy* (hang in there, John). Seriously, when kart racing is this bad, lacking a stable camera, with a weak weapons system and graphics that are decidedly 1st generation PlayStation, what else can be said? Okay, the video clips and number of levels are pluses, but can't stop this from being a pile of Fraggle doodoo. Avoid at all costs.

G 4 C 4 P 3 M 7 O 2 — **50**



Muppet Race Mania
PlayStation
Midway
Kart Racing

I have an idea: Let's make an RTS that's so painfully complex that it becomes more a chore than a joy to play. It looks neat, it plays decently, but it requires a PhD in mechanical engineering to come to grips with its building block gameplay—I have no qualms with complexity, but when it gets in the way of playability, a line must be drawn. Still, there's fun to be had if you're very patient and willing to really, really put your nose to the grindstone and figure it all out. Sadly, I play games for fun, not for their intrinsic complexity or overreaching design.

G 8 C 5 P 5 M 5 O 9 — **68**

This Psygnosis strategy game, now under the Midway label, has captivated many GF staffers, but I can't seem to get into it. Perhaps it's the difficulty that's souring my taste, especially considering things look so innocent on the surface. But aside from the challenging gameplay, the amount of vehicles, weapons and characters, it never really seems to come together. Why? Well, mainly because you have to engage in painstaking micro-management which I've never been good at. But if Midway wants to talk about a *TB* action game...

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 7 — **77**

The Skill Police were called in to aid a wayward frozen waffle who was stuck on the 4th level of *Team Buddies*. After multiple tries (even the police gotta warm up), many successful tallies were accrued and Eggo lavished much praise upon me (I feel 17 again...). Seriously, while TB looks like a kids game on the surface, the sheer amount of strategy and thought that must go into each mission is staggering. Comical hijinks, cool vehicles and staggering mayhem (cartoon style), helps to make this one a serious contender for best PS strategy game to date.

G 9 C 8 P 10 M 7 O 9 — **88**



Team Buddies
PlayStation
Midway
Strategy
Eggo's Score: 87
Reviewed pg. 98

Not as good as the first. Oh, the two 'skaters' to my right will try to tell you otherwise, but don't believe them. While they like all the added, new-fangled crazy stuff, I for one, thought the original THPS actually got it all right the first time. It feels like things were simply added for the sake of it: a track editor? Yeah, two people will use that for 15 minutes and never touch it again. The soundtrack's improved (and I know how you all buy games for their soundtracks) but everything else that made THPS a classic has been toyed with. It's not a bad game, just not as good.

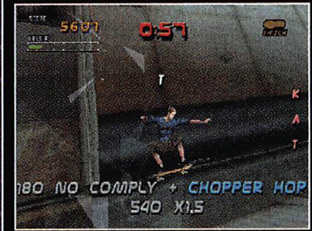
G 8 C 9 P 7 M 9 O 5 — **80**

After spending months with Grind Session, I forgot what it's like to have to concentrate on landing tricks (hey, anything to make Fury's life easier, right?). But THPS wasn't just more realistic than GS, it provided the better overall package in terms of visuals, level design and combos. THPS2 is no different, and eclipses the first TH by including a create your own skate park mode and way more transfer areas. The visuals seem pretty reminiscent of the first Hawk and the soundtrack once again kicks major ass! Bad Religion gets my vote.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 7 — **92**

Dave Mirra who? *Tony Hawk 2* picks up where the original left off, and takes things one step further. The best game soundtrack starring live bands ever serves as the perfect compliment to sweet gameplay taken to new heights. Every level is a wealth of hidden areas to grind, leap to, and wall slide off of. The first *Tony Hawk* was an instant classic, and this game is better in nearly every aspect. If you think you've seen it all, you probably haven't. Replay value is mindblowing with all the sick combos available... and did I mention there's a course editor?

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 10 O 7 — **96**



Tony Hawk 2
PlayStation
Activision
Skateboarding



Tyco R.C. Racing
PlayStation
Mattel
Racing

Jeez, after the mess that was PS *Revolt*, you'd think the RC genre had seen its last incarnation in the console world. That's what you'd think, but this is the games industry, after all—there's always plenty of room for more <whimper>. Being a fan of kart titles, I usually have a soft spot in my heart for games of this type, but *Tyco RC* is too boring to keep my interest and the graphics reek of first generation quality (and just why do so many late generation PS games look so... bad?). But worst of all, the game moves as slow as Kodomo sans Red Bull.

G 5 | C 5 | P 6 | M 5 | O 6 — **60**

Only one thing is more painful than 'playing' this game, writing viewpoints that are now 110 words (up from 80). Thanks again, ECM, please continue to make my life hell and wake me when I sleep at work. Anyway, the graphics are moderately better than *Revolt*, but physics, framerate and gameplay are lost causes. Most of the levels are cool (save for the looped ones), and I can actually see the 2-player mode becoming fun, but I've always been one for the immersive one-player experience. Save your cash and buy a real RC car, you'll thank me later.

G 6 | C 5 | P 10 | M 10 | O 10 — **72**

Granted, I like this game better than *Revolt*, but that's not saying much. The graphics are unabashedly PlayStation (hide the women and children); the music is blase; but luckily the gameplay salvages it to a degree. The flashy weapons are entertaining, the tracks are well-designed, and weaving between other racers while driving under cars in traffic reminded me of that scene in *Toy Story 2*. Still, racing R/C cars is entertaining for only so long, and when it comes to reaching for the wallet for this game, *Tyco R/C* gets $3 instead of $35.

G 6 | C 7 | P 7 | M 6 | O 7 — **71**



Ogre Battle 64
Nintendo 64
Atlus
Strategy
ECM's Score: 96
Reviewed pg. 116

What do you get when you combine strategy with an RPG—generally a game that I would avoid like one of Kodomo's mustard gas explosions. But believe it or not, I've actually found myself in awe of *Ogre Battle 64*. The art style alone in this game deserves much praise and, as ECM stated in his review, the translations are at the top of their game. The only real problem here, is that unless you're familiar with the earlier *Ogre Battle* (on SNES), you might be struggling a bit to figure out the battle system. Forget the PS rev, this is *OB* done right!

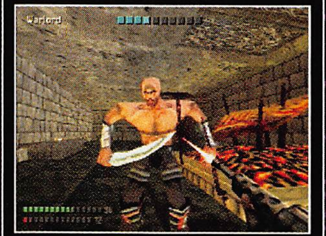
G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 8 — **90**

For the longest time, Eggo and ECM ranted and raved, almost climbing the walls to get a playable English version of this game, and I couldn't understand why. Well, with game in hand, I've gotta say, *OB64* is everything they said it was and more. Graphically, it's amazingly clean, detailed and pleasing to look at. The translation is also top notch (with 'sh*t' appearing a few times) and the story begs to be unraveled. The battle system might take a little getting used to, real time on a mini-chess board is a little weird, but considering the other N64 RPGs, it's a must buy.

G 9 | C 8 | P 10 | M 9 | O 9 — **92**

Gamers who are no stranger to eBay are well aware of how good/popular *Ogre Battle* is. Just try tracking down a copy of the SNES *OB* without forfeiting organs or kid sisters and you'll see it's not easy. People love their *Ogre Battle*, and for good reason. This is one of the best strategy games on the market, melding old school gameplay with gorgeous, cartoony graphics, set in a fantastic medieval world. What more could you ask for? Reserve your copy now, because there won't be many copies. Lord knows you don't want to turn to eBay... again.

G 10 | C 9 | P 9 | M 8 | O 6 — **92**



Turok 3
Nintendo 64
Acclaim
First Person Shooter
ECM's Score: 98
Reviewed pg. 112

I can admit it, I was put off by the size of the levels in *Turok 2* (each stage was like a game in itself). But *T3* is far more linear and this time you actually feel like you're making progress getting to the end of levels. Don't think, though, that just because the stages aren't as big, the detail has been overlooked. The game looks absolutely great and the mood is darker than any previous *Turok* outing (thanks in part to one twisted tale... so what's up with that spooky council anyway?). And luckily, no massive frame loss like in *T2*. Still, best to keep hi res off.

G 8 | C 9 | P 9 | M 7 | O 8 — **94**

I was almost laughed out of the office when I revealed that I never played the first *Turok* game (this, following the revelation that I beat up a polio victim in the 3rd grade...). True, back then I couldn't afford an N64, and I did pay the price. *T3* takes the series to new heights, although the levels are much shorter than in *T2*. You'll also get to see the most amazing cut scene graphics on the N64 to date (actual humanoids with moving facial features!). While I'm not going the ECM route with *Turok 3*, pick it up for the 3rd best N64 FPS action (behind the Bonds).

G 9 | C 9 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 — **89**

I'm really upset here. *Turok 3* looks like an awesome game which I would love to finish, but unfortunately, the low frame-rate of this FPS makes me sick. Within 10 minutes of walking along, I've got a headache the size of Fury's quickly expanding waistline. *T3*'s story, however, looks amazing. It's cinematic in the telling, and it makes you want to continue to find out what happens. The graphics are a bit garish by today's standards (definitely not the eye opener that *T2* was), but the many improvements (e.g., smaller levels) make it better than *T2*.

G 7 | C 9 | P 8 | M 8 | O 7 — **83**



T.W.I.N.E.
Nintendo 64
Electronic Arts
First Person Shooter
ECM's Score: 94
Reviewed pg. 114

EA brings us Bond the way we remember it... *TWINE* truly is *GoldenEye* reborn! Yes, I know it's a lofty statement, but it is true. All of the fun (sniping, cool gadgets etc) that we loved in Rare's 007 has been included in *TWINE*—easily the best N64 game Eurocom has EVER crafted. While you're not going to see anything really new here, *TWINE*'s strength lies in its ability to mimic the action in *GoldenEye*'s story mode. From stages that pit Britain's super spy against snowmobiling terrorists, to engaging in full recon missions, you'll agree, EA has done Bond proud.

G 8 | C 9 | P 8 | M 7 | O 6 — **92**

Wow! This is from EA and not Rare? Holy Hell, someone's slipped EA some good stuff. This is only second to the mighty *GoldenEye* for N64 FPS games. The sheer number and variety of levels (skiing while shooting, protection, etc.) are staggering. Throw in a frame rate that is damn near rock solid and a bevy of weapons that are guaranteed to please, and you've got quality stuff. When you make a game that smokes the movie that inspires it AND that game smokes the latest similar outing from Rare (namely *Perfect Dark*), you've done right!

G 9 | C 10 | P 10 | M 8 | O 8 — **94**

I'll admit EA shocked the hell out of me with this one. Following in the footsteps of Rare's masterpiece, *GoldenEye*, Eurocom had some extremely large and successful shoes to fill, and I think they did an admirable job. This is no *GoldenEye*-killer, but it's a deserving sequel with sound play mechanics, nifty gadgets, and a healthy dose of 007 espionage. Those worried that EA has butchered your beloved Bond license, rest easy. Now when is Nintendo going to finally give me a mouse and keyboard for a FPS?

G 8 | C 9 | P 8 | M 8 | O 7 — **82**

My god, it's a new shooter... let's all rejoice. Unfortunately, people often overlook just how good a game is because it's part of a dying genre—Case in point: *Giga Wing*. And what do we have here? *Mars Matrix*, a shooter by the same creator of the ill fated *Giga* project. And just like *GW*, *MM* suffers from ridiculous bullet-itis. Yes, the glory of finding that perfect hole in a midst of enemy fire has been dumped in favor of a shield mechanic that creates the ever-sought-after safe point. Endless dodging and weaving is more my speed.

G 7 / C 8 / P 6 / M 6 / O 7 — **80**

Okay, so it's readily apparent that I have failed the "ECM Shooter Love School" and appreciate them as much as getting kicked in the head, but *MM* is just what you'd expect from Capcom: Quality. If you have to ask what to expect, you're probably missing the point. Massive amounts of projectiles coming your way and all the requisite power-ups make appearances, culminating in a challenging arcade game. Sadly, there's only so much you can do with these type of games <looks around for hammer-wielding ECM> and it isn't innovative.

G 7 / C 9 / P 8 / M 7 / O 6 — **84**

Though it's by the same guys, *Mars Matrix* is simply more challenging and fun than *Giga Wing*. I try to use the black hole bomb as seldom as possible, so I'm constantly scrambling for safety (something I crave, but don't always find in shooters). Sadly, it's probably easier to find a *VOOT* machine in an American arcade than *Mars Matrix*. Hopefully, Capcom will find a way to port this to Dreamcast , so it doesn't die a miserable, lonely death in a backwoods pizza parlor, with its praises only sung by the bard ECM in Graveyard or Shooter Alley.

G 8 / C 9 / P 9 / M 7 / O 7 — **90**



Mars Matrix
Arcade
Capcom
Shooter
ECM's Score: 79
Reviewed pg. 140

Um, is this what *Gun Griffon* has come to? When I was a younger man and this game debuted on Saturn it was a great game. Intense, strategic mech combat with CG that rivaled PS games of the day. Then came *GG2* which failed to capture the same thrills of its predecessor. Now say hello to *GG* Arcade Edition. I play *AC2* for my arcade fix, I play *GG* for a strategic angle which has sadly gone the way of the dodo. IF it played as well as *AC2* this would be a different story. As it is, it's fast and pretty but the gameplay got left behind.

G 8 / C 7 / P 6 / M 7 / O 6 — **70**

Poor *Gun Griffon Blaze*, it was bound to get a bit overlooked, arriving in the same month as *Armored Core 2*. And unlike the Saturn version of *GG*, the PS2 build appears to center more on straight up action (arcade style all the way!). While the visuals are decent (landscapes look nice) the games graphics pale in comparison to *AC* (especially the mechs). And if you're looking for the more forgiving game, it would have to be *GG*—pick ups can be collected during battles whereas once you enter into an *AC* match, you better hope you have what it takes!

G 8 / C 9 / P 8 / M 6 / O 7 — **85**

Gun Griffon has always seemed like the younger brother of *Armored Core*, always hoping for acceptance, but never quite cool enough to hang out with the other mech boys. If you can't quite measure up visually, the least you can do is offer better control, lots of explosions, and arcade-like action. Given a choice, I'll take this over *Armored Core 2*, solely for the emphasis on action. At the end of the day, however, the many explosions and minor fun factor don't justify spending any more money than the rental fee on *Gun Griffon Blaze*. Back to *VOOT* for me.

G 7 / C 8 / P 7 / M 6 / O 6 — **73**



Gun Griffon Blaze
PlayStation 2 import
Capcom
Adventure
Kodomo's Score: 83
Reviewed pg. 136

If you loved *Mario RPG*, you're gonna at least like *Mario Story*. Whimsical 'paper' characters; great, turn-based/real time head bopping action; and that Nintendo magic that only they can provide (or through one of their various second party pals). I had some doubts as to what they could manage without Square's magical touch, but they've all been firmly eradicated. Needless to say, this is yet another surefire hit from the Big 'N' and makes the wait for GameCube a little less painful. One note: wait for the US release, people... if you can.

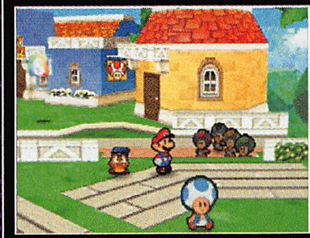
G 8 / C 8 / P 9 / M 8 / O 8 — **92**

You've got to hand it to Nintendo. They don't release a whole lotta N64 games, but when they do, chances are that it will be quality stuff. Such is the case with *MS*, whose retro goodness oozes and bleeds like a Male Cosplayer in a frat house. There is a reason why this game has owned the Japanese sales charts for 2 weeks running (read: gameplay, graphics and sheer, quirky fun) and you can do far, far worse than picking up *MS*. Remember *Mario RPG* on SNES? If you've longed for a similar game, it's here now and well worth the wait.

G 8 / C 6 / P 9 / M 8 / O 8 — **87**

Mario Story represents the first true Nintendo-bred RPG for the aging Fun Machine. And after word that *Mother 3* was canned (Hey, what's a few million in development when you're as big as Nintendo), we should all be thankful we're at least getting something as cool as this. But how has development limbo affected this pseudo *Mario RPG* sequel? How does an awesome cast of Miyamoto's best 2D characters atop vivid 3D backdrops sound? Fans of the SNES original shouldn't overlook MS because its geared for kids... it's Mario, it's 2D and I'm in heaven!

G 9 / C 8 / P 9 / M 7 / O 8 — **90**



Mario Story
Nintendo 64 import
Nintendo
Role-Playing
Eggo's Score: 87
Reviewed pg. 134

Imagine my excitement prior to popping *SHR* into my Dreamcast... a 2D beat-'em-up for the DC starring super-deformed robots (of course at the time I had no idea that the Power Rangers were part of this mix)! Too good to be true and so it was. Visually, *SHR* is what you'd expect on a 16 bit system, but even then you'd be depressed. And dash those hopes that the play mechanics can salvage this one—dear god, you fight on a grid that serves no purpose and the beat-'em-up portion is an absolute joke. Nostalgia won't seem so sweet this time around.

G 5 / C 4 / P 4 / M 5 / O 5 — **50**

Ummmm... I'm the resident Japanese Sausage 'round these parts, but even I have my limits. Let's see, where do I start? The characters are annoyingly cute, and I can only surmise that death would be a fitting punishment for them. From there, you've got a horizontal grid system, which somehow translates into a 2D brawler? Ooookay. Thankfully, the game isn't deep in the gameplay or moves department, so the fear of being sucked in is low. Come on, when ECM betrays his fellow 'Vertically Challenged Kinfolk,' it's gotta be bad.

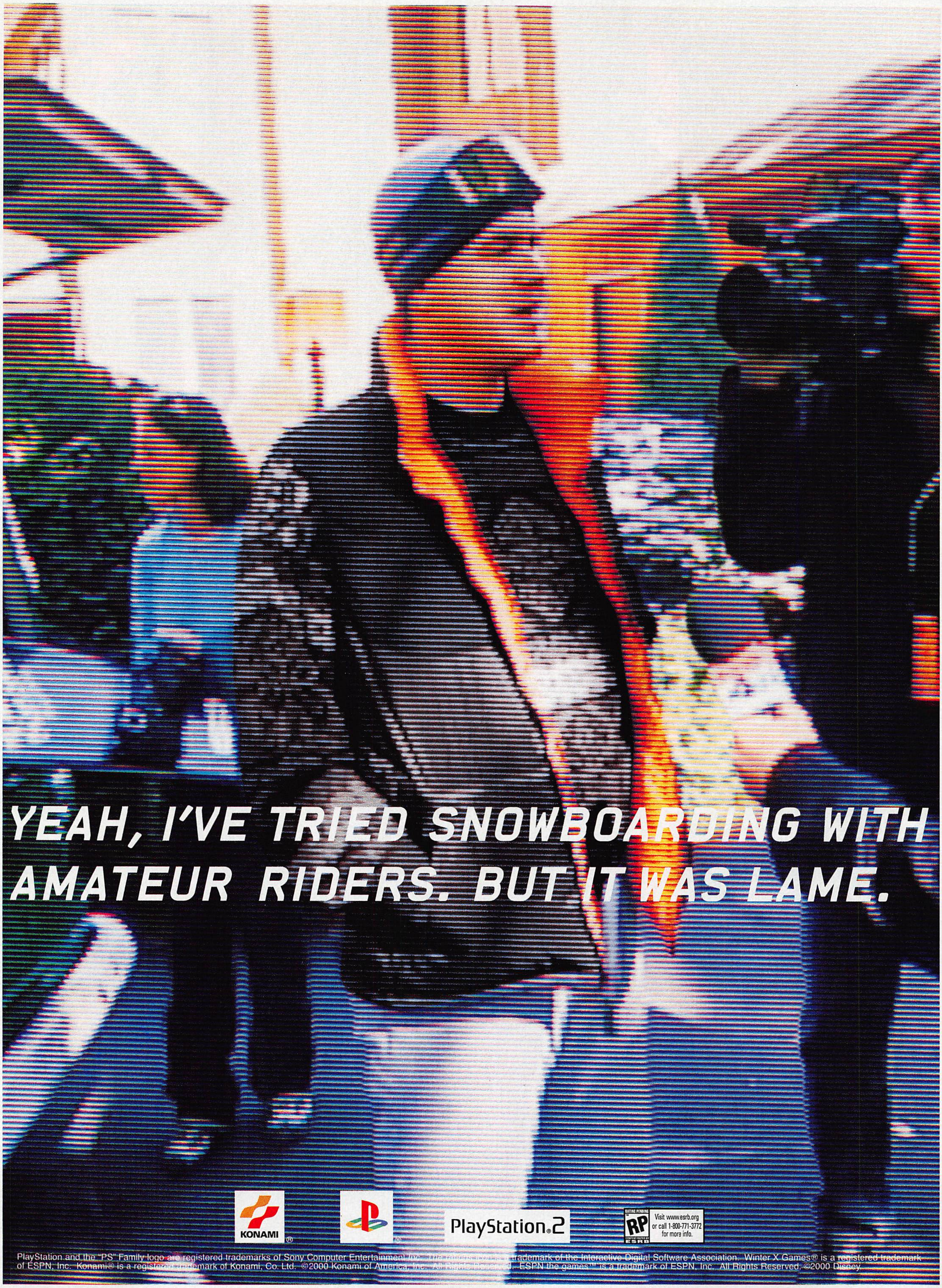
G 6 / C 6 / P 4 / M 3 / O 5 — **59**

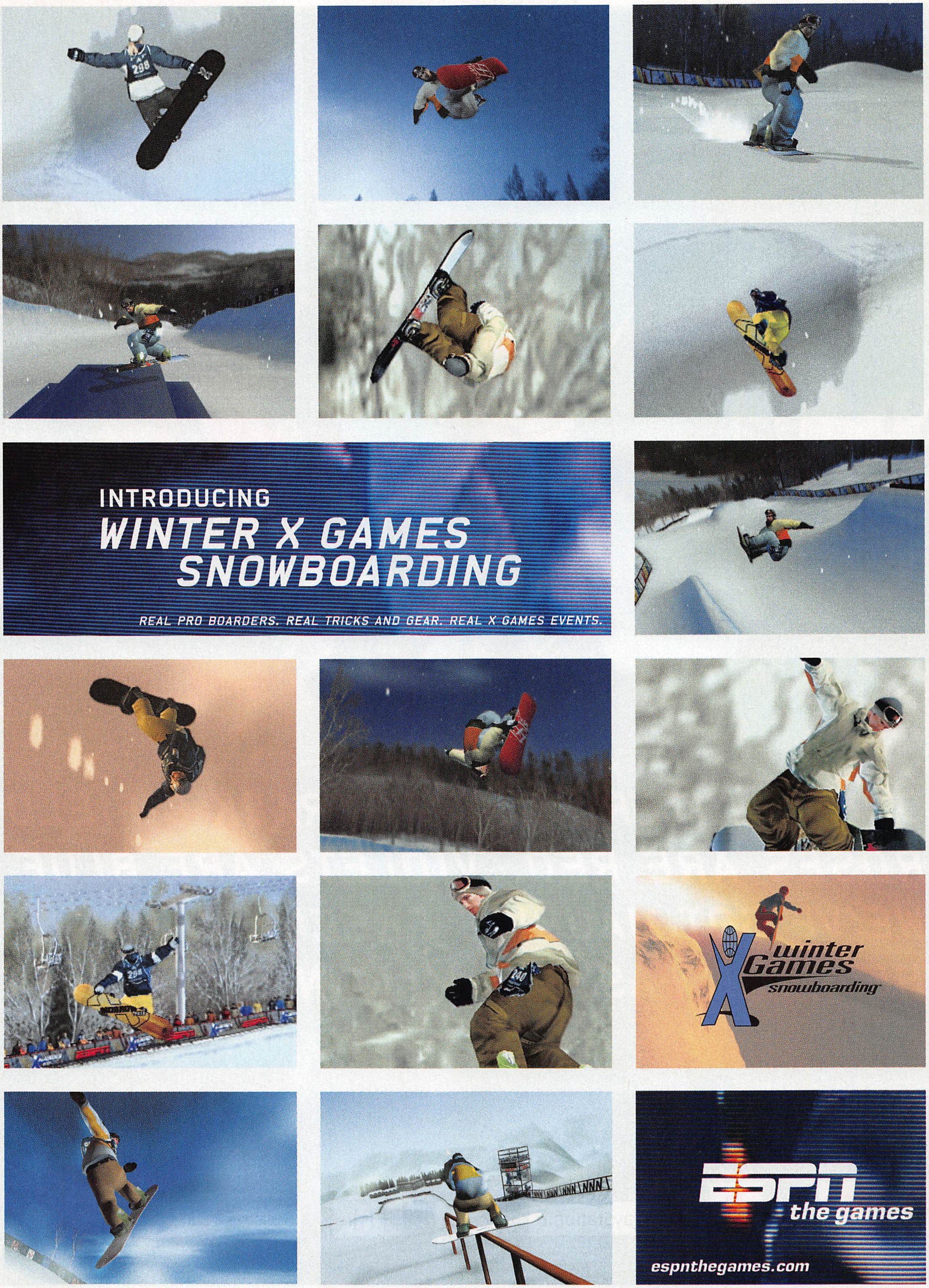
SHR reeks of Saturday morning *Godzilla* movie. Ultra-Japanese super hero cheese meets robots and a beat-'em-up premise. While it sounds cool on paper to have another 2D beat-'em-up with a high novelty factor, *SHR* does nothing but disappoint. The laundry list of features which could've made this game great is too lengthy to list in its entirety: longer range, better character design, more moves, strategic gameplay, some semblance of depth, etc. About the only thing cool here is the music and the idea. I'll give it this much—it's better than *Super Robot Wars*.

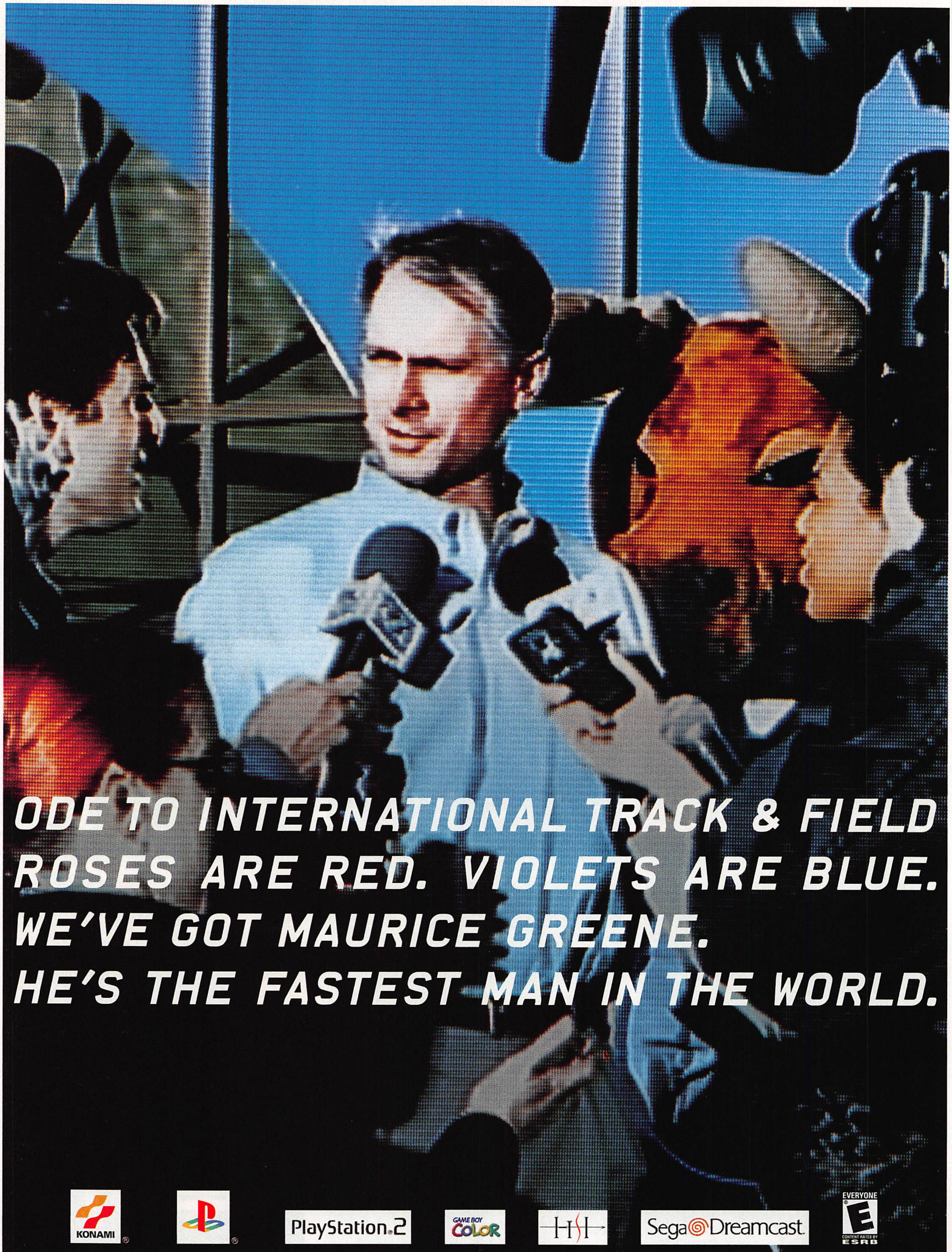
G 6 / C 6 / P 5 / M 8 / O 8 — **68**



Super Hero Retsuden
Dreamcast import
Banpresto
Beat-'em-Up
ECM's Score: 45
Reviewed pg. 138


YEAH, I'VE TRIED SNOWBOARDING WITH
AMATEUR RIDERS. BUT IT WAS LAME.
KONAMI
PlayStation2
RATING PENDING RP
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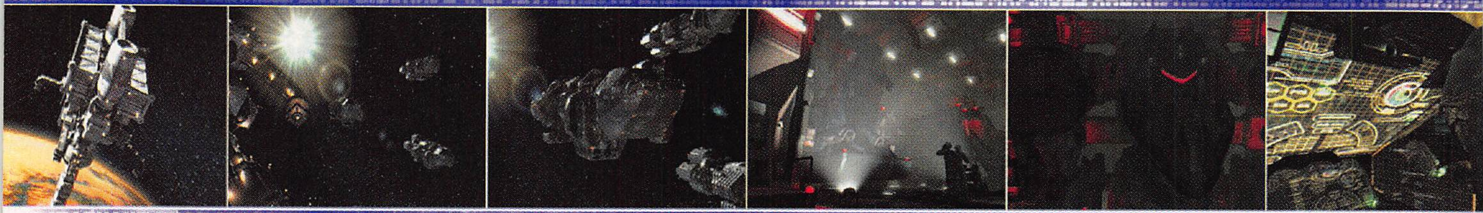

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ROSES ARE RED. VIOLETS ARE BLUE.
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HE'S THE FASTEST MAN IN THE WORLD.
KONAMI
PlayStation 2
GAME BOY COLOR
Sega Dreamcast
EVERYONE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

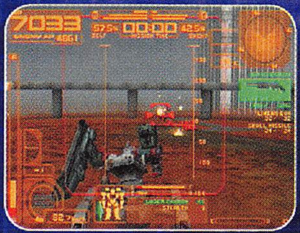

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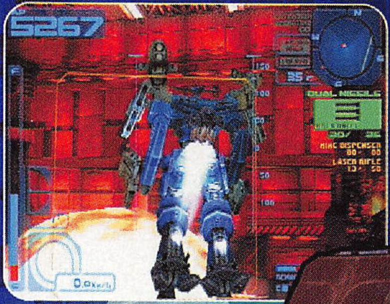

SILENT SCOPE
SILENT SCOPE IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR PLAYSTATION 2 AND DREAMCAST, COMPLETE WITH AN ON-SCREEN TARGETING SYSTEM, MAGNIFIABLE SCOPE, MULTIPLE BRANCHING PATHS AND DETAILED GRAPHICS DRAWN STRAIGHT FROM THE ARCADE ORIGINAL. AND YES, THE PRESIDENT IS STILL BEING HELD HOSTAGE. YOU'RE THE SNIPER WHO'S SENT TO SAVE HIM. ALL YOU'LL NEED IS A STEADY HAND, A GOOD EYE, AND AN IRON STOMACH.
PlayStation 2
Dreamcast
MATURE
Animated Violence
Animated Blood
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB


KONAMI











"The Joy of Mech-dom"

For just a moment, I forget where I am and start to enjoy the view. The desert below looks serene, with a scant few buildings and remnants of highways suddenly reminding me that a great city surely stood in this very spot. Dirt becomes man-made structure, and then dirt again, evoking some cyclical thought of the nature of life. Then it hits me.

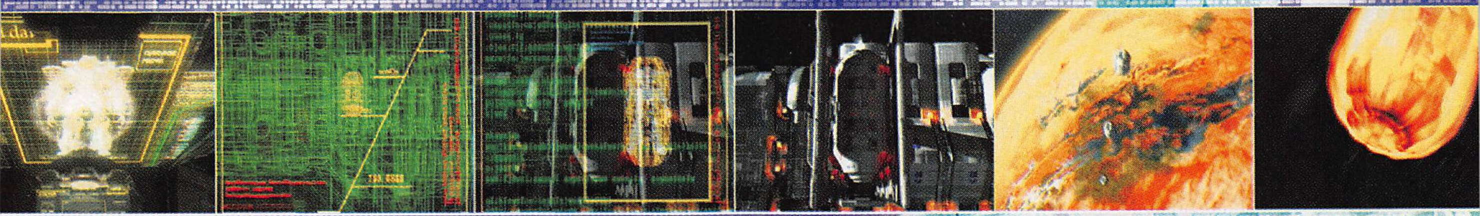
More accurately, *they* hit me. Missiles. I can't tell exactly how many, my Heads Up Display went into overload faster and shut down the instant I was hit, but it must've been at least 4. My mech's armor drops off, followed quickly by its energy, and I'm left to the devices immediately at hand.

When missiles take too long to lock-on and close combat isn't an option, the ZWG-BZ/555 always works. Packing more power than any other comparable rifle, it was made for the sole purpose of quick, painful destruction. Get hit with this thing just once, and you'll kiss upwards of 10% of your armor good bye.

My prey obviously knows this, and he's not going to go gently into that good night. He comes at me fast, not in a straight line, but bobbing and weaving so I can't get a decent bead on him. Fast, too damn fast and I know how this one's going to end all too quickly. Once my ability to dash has been wasted, there's nothing I can do. In another flash of missiles, just like the first, my mech collapses around me and becomes a massive pile of scrap.

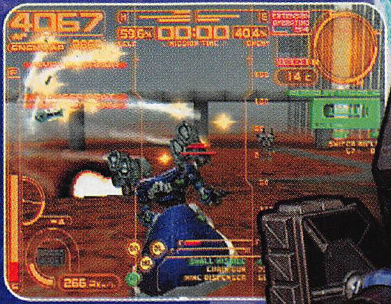


REVIEW	KODOMO: I have not yet begun to fight...	Developer - From Software Publisher - Agetec	1-2 Players & Link Available Oct 26	Viewpoint Score: 88



"I need a new job."

Indeed. When it's 2:24 in the morning on a Sunday night and I'm voluntarily at work just to play *Armored Core 2* for the 4th day in a row (and here you thought the life of an editor was the best in the world...), something's got to give. One thing leads to another and, much like our resident barbarian (read: Eggo under the spell of *Diablo II* for yet another day), sleep becomes less and less of an option. But when a game's this good, maybe it's worth it.







The Bleak Future of AC2

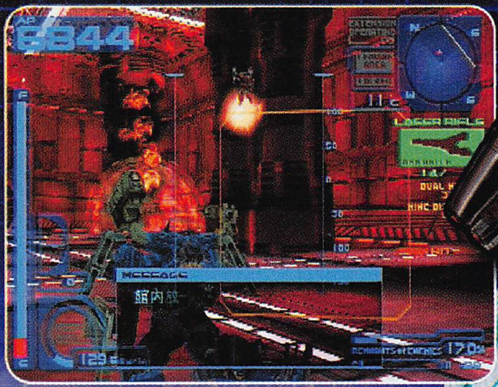
When things go bad in AC, they *really* go bad. The Earth, decimated by a not-so-far-off future war, has become uninhabitable. Whatever humans survived fled into underground caves and have gone about the task of rebuilding society. Unfortunately, fully reviving a scorched Earth is just about as tough as it sounds and it became readily apparent that humanity was going to have to move somewhere else if it was going to survive.

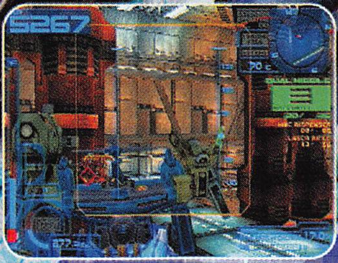
Enter Mars, the red planet, and a massive terra-forming action undertaken by several large corporations. As you might imagine, corporations care about one thing (and one thing only), total control, and the corporations are raging small-scale conflicts between them to establish dominance on the red planet.

Enter the Ravens...

As a mercenary, your skills were tested and proved during the riots and terrorist activities on Earth, but this is a different story. As you arrive on Mars, you are greeted with one simple task: Immediately prove yourself as a Raven, or Mech piloting mercenary, or die.

Provided that you actually do survive your first 'test', the game begins. *AC2* is split up into 2 main categories, with a few more sub-categories thrown in for good measure. Both the Missions and Arena Battle are where you'll do your fighting, while the store, e-mail program and customization options will accentuate/upgrade the information and parts that you acquire.

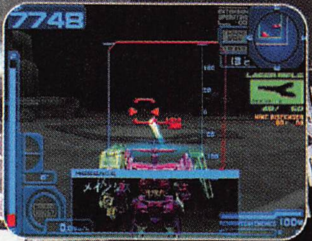


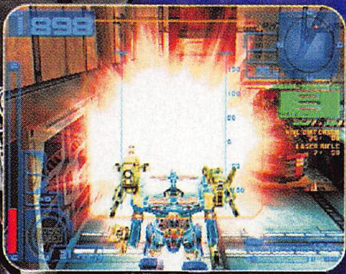












As far as PlayStation 2 games go (and truth be told, they haven't really come that far... yet), *AC2* offers some of the best visuals to date. The PS2's trademark smooth visuals and ability to push impressive amounts of polygons are both used en masse, yielding a fully realized world that has massive amounts of environments with subtle effects (such as a snow or sand storm) to wander through. You'll also see visuals that **don't** suffer from the much discussed 'anti-aliasing' problems that a few earlier titles were plagued by, as lines on deserted buildings or extensive encampments look clean and sharp.

This is a mech fighting game, and that is where most of the poly-pushing power has been thrown. After seeing a preliminary version of the game at the PlayStation Festival 2000, Eggo was heard to remark, as only he can, "Dude, the character models in *AC2* kills *VOOT*!" Of course, Señor Chicken Hawk was talking about the *other* popular Mech fighter, Sega's *Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram*, and that is the vehicle by which most gamers will judge the game.

Take one good look at the *AC2* mechs and you will indeed see that they destroy *VOOT*'s, in both form and function. Imagine a game where you aren't limited solely to a choice between 11 mechs (amazingly cool as they are), but can mix, match and combine an amazing amount of parts and weapons to make the best mech that *you* want. Whether it's fitted with 2 standard legs, a mini-tank hovering platform or 4 jutting spikes that emulate a spider, you get to decide what to use. Tired of those tiny, weak arms? Dump them for a beefier set that can take and dish out more damage (if only real-life was this easy...) or opt for the set of appendages that double as a set of missile launchers. Of course, there is a price to pay for this customization madness...



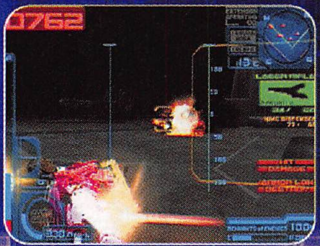


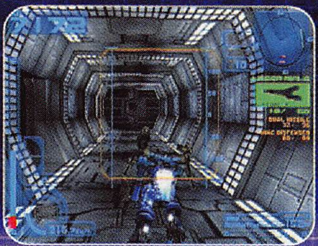
It's all about the money...

Well, credits, actually, if you want to be picky about it. The catch is, of course, you must earn the upgrades and actually buy them by successful completion of missions or arena battles.

The missions are varied, much like the clients that hire you to perform them. The major corporations, such as Zio Matrix, Nerves Concord and Emeraude, will hire to you blow up/invade/kill those that oppose them, but since you are a mercenary, working for competing corporations on successive missions is par for the course. Ranging from the very simple "Terminate a defector" to the advanced "Protect airbase from all foes, bombers and rival mechs included," you'll have quite a handful to contend with, both action and strategy wise. See, you'll get paid as long as you complete each mission, be it with the stealth of a ninja or the candor of Chow Yun Fat walking in through the front door with both guns blazing, but even in the world of *AC2* the repairman cometh. Take a severe beating, while still meeting the requirements for success, and you'll leave with a paltry sum of credits that will buy you next to nothing after paying your extensive repair bill. Worse yet, fail your mission by getting your ass kicked like Dango "I was just feeling him out" Head in a *VOOT* tournament, and you'll slink away in the negative cash flow department. Do it a few times and you'll be cloned up from the ashes (What do you think happens to a human in a chunkified Mech, anyway?), and forced to start from the beginning of the game. Skill is a factor, and you will be tested at every turn, so bring your 'A' game from the get go.











Quothe the Raven, 'Nevermore'

The Arena Mode is equally frustrating and, ultimately, satisfying. Starting out as the 'scrub of all scrubs', the task is to work your way past 49 opponents, until you alone stand at the top of the heap. When you have vanquished all that oppose you (in sequential order), you'll earn the title of 'Nine Breaker' and a heap of cash for the effort.

As you might expect, the parts required for Missions and Arena Battle differ, despite the obvious overlap. Of course, the standard upgrades of Core, Head, Arms and Legs will benefit you in both endeavors, but an entirely different set of weapons is required when it's you against one opponent who has no other concern save killing you.

Case in point: Cruising along in the rankings, thanks to the purchase of a set of missile launching arms, I jumped from 44th rank to 36th with little effort. All that was required of me was to dash-dodge my opponent's gun (as I said before, they just don't lock-on quick enough) and fire 2 missiles every couple of seconds. Less than 20 seconds later, I was the victor and one up in the ranks. Sadly, at the magic number of 35, the tactic no longer worked. For at that glorious time, I fought an opponent who had anti-missile-missiles, which totally negated my attack. When he switched to his main offensive weapon, a powerful shotgun, after I was out of missiles, that was all she wrote and I chalked up one more in the loss column.

You'll also be required to possess some modicum of weight control (something that I tell young Fury each and every day), as you can't simply load up your Mech with all the good parts. Until you actually do get that top of the line body, you can wear all the top of the line equipment, but choosing only certain things (hence, shotgun that weighs 2,000 pounds is worth 2 missile launchers that weigh 1,000).

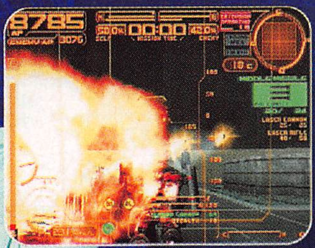
There are miles to go...

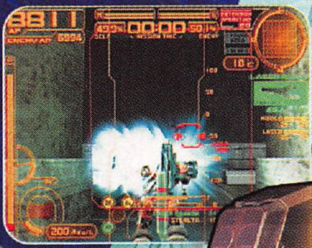
After you digest all that on your new console/DVD player (can you hear the audible cries of "*The Matrix* is the top selling Japanese PS2 title" by ECM...), you've still got a few tricks to peruse through. When the single player mode has worn thin (and, given the immense customization possibilities, it just might never), the standard split screen versus mode can be played ad nasuem. *AC2* is also the first PS2 game to make use of the, thus unseen, link cable, allowing for full screen action. One thing is clear, though, if you have any hope of achieving success, be it in the single or multi-player mode, bring the very best mech that you have, and take no prisoners.

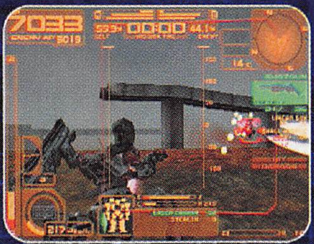
Your opponent certainly won't.

Kodomo's not usually a fan of conflicts in which the participants wear "armor"—American football, for one.

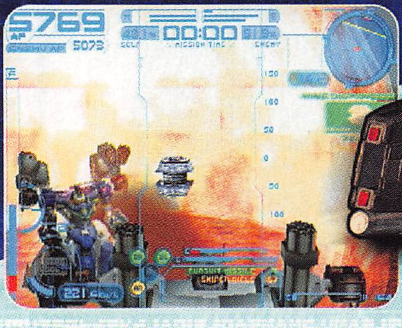

















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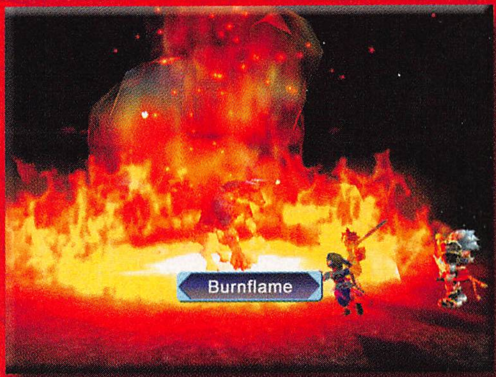
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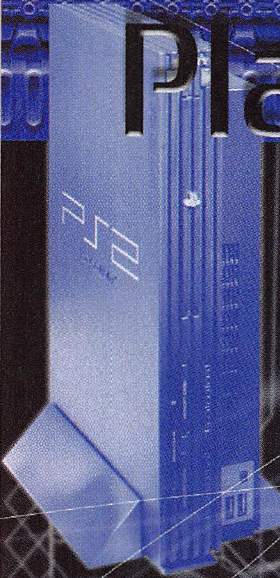




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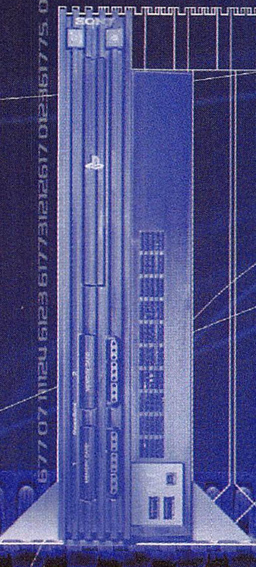
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GameFan's 10 Most Wanted



Last year we compiled a wish list of games we wanted to see on the Dreamcast back when the system launched. Now, Sony's unleashing the successor to the most successful console in history, barring handhelds (i.e., the PlayStation, in case you've somehow developed an immunity to Sony's mighty PR machine, which has been spouting the PS gospel over the past some odd years). Since the PlayStation 2 is bound to play host to a number of sequels (considering the countless successful franchises on PS1), we figured we'd chip in our two cents on the games we'd actually like to see sequels to. If we can't hold back the deluge of unoriginality, hopefully we can at least channel our energy into a positive direction (here's a hint: put Lara to sleep).

To make things a bit more interesting, we decided to exclude titles that have already been announced or have no chance of being made. In other words, you won't see Metal Gear Solid 2 on everyone's list (except for ECM's... we still haven't figured out why he doesn't join us in early morning devotions in Hideo Kojima's direction), and you won't see fantasy games (Zelda, Sonic, Skull Monkeys 2) that could never happen because of competing consoles or disbanded developers. What you will see are the games that we still play or are yearning to see updates of.





ECM's PS2 Most Wanted List

I wanted to make sure I'd list games that actually had a snowball's chance in hades of making it to PS2, so for those of you looking for *Skull Monkeys*, *One*, *Apocalypse*, *Project Overkill*, etc., know that if it could ever be, they would have made my list.



1 Final Fantasy Tactics

The PS' finest hour and the most intense strategy RPG of all time (yes, even better than *Shining Force*). The story, graphics and (most importantly) gameplay made this one of the best PS games period. Judging by the number of eds that want to see a sequel to this underrated ultra-classic, maybe there's still some slim hope of a PS2 return.



2 Vagrant Story

What's that? Two Square games in my most wanted list? Oh yes... now maybe all the fools that call me anti-Square will shut up—I doubt it, though. *VS* featured the creator of *Tactics* doing what he does best: create ultra-hardcore games that only about 5% of the gaming populace will 'get.'



3 Strider

We had to wait (almost) ten years for a sequel but the wait was worth it. Though the odds are against it (what? $30 not cheap enough for ya?... feh), I wouldn't be adverse to a third, true outing of Capcom's greatest action hero. This time with hi-res textures, and blazing animation to complement the unearthly control.



4 Rage Racer

Not *Ridge Racer*, **Rage Racer**. That's right, what is conceivably Namco's finest hour and my favorite console racing game of the last five years begs, kicks and screams for a proper update—the first was an adrenaline junky, roller-coaster fiend dream come true! *RRV* can't even lick its boots...



5 Castlevania

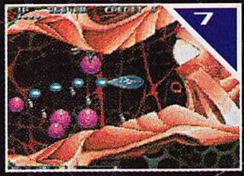
While I'm apparently the only person that enjoyed the second 3D N64 *Castlevania* (who'd a thunk it?), I really itch for a staggering, once again *Metroid*-inspired follow-up to *SOTN*. While *Dracula X* on PCE is still the king, I'm more than willing to take another trip with Alucard through the bowels of Castle Dracula.



6 MediEvil

Sony Europe's opus deserves an update... based on the first game, not the second. The Tim Burton-inspired world of Dan Fortesque would look stunning blazing across the PS2's virgin hardware (and we all know that Euro coders know how to work a machine). And hey, maybe they could even get the camera to work this time around.





7 Gradius Gaiden

Yeah, yeah, we got *Gradius III&IV*, but is that the best we can expect from the series? Let's hope not. However, I would kill for a follow-up to *Gradius Gaiden*, which is probably the best shmup on PS (with *G-Darius* and *Einhander* its only competition). It'd also be a good 2D workout for the fledgling PS2.



8 Darius

I love the 32-bit games in this classic series—while I was less-than-thrilled with earlier outings I would definitely like a sequel to *G-Darius* with more intense bosses; bigger weapons; and slightly less evil final baddies. After all, giant fish swimming through space is cool, right?



9 Ghouls 'N Ghosts

Why oh why do I have to beg for an update to this game when there's one out there **right now** begging to be released?! C'mon Capcom, you gave us *Strider* back, now how 'bout Arthur (his turn in *Cannon Spike* doesn't count). Just imagine a blazing, 2D, hand drawn (or rendered sprite) based *GnG*. Gets me all warm and fuzzy just thinking about it... then I remember the Wonder Swan version, eek.



10 Front Mission

Oh my God! Three Square games?! Now you can officially 'shut up.' That's right, Square's other, less-respectable strat RPG also makes the list. Since mechs are always cool, and generally so are strategy RPGs, it's a match made in gaming heaven. This time, though, let's make it so you aren't able to use the same strategy over and over again in **every** battle, k?





















The Judge's PS2 Most Wanted List

Ok, I'll admit it: The thing that excites me more than anything else, about the introduction of a new console, is the possibility of seeing my old faves given some new life.. Some games were meant be seen again and again (and I am not talking about Laura or Sarge), and here are my picks...

1 Pirates! Gold

Eggo and I have been clamoring for Sid Meier to do an update to this classic since we got jobs at GameFan. It ranked as my favorite Genesis game of all time and my favorite Apple/Commodore game of all time. Hasbro, who now owns Microprose, needs to develop this title for the PS2, if not for the hordes of gamers who never got a chance to play this title, then for me and Eggo.

2 Final Fantasy Tactics

If the Eagles can get back together, why not the team that brought you the best *Final Fantasy* title to date? *Tactics* was one of the great PlayStation titles but suffered from lackluster sales because most Americans are idiots. Give us another chance Square... make a PS2 version.

3 World Cup Rugby

With all of the standard sports being beaten to death, how about an update of this stellar EA title, for the Genesis? I am willing to bet a dark horse game like this would sell well considering the lack of original sports product that is slated. Scrum time, baby!

4 Pool of Radiance

Mattel's *AD&D* title for the PC is just the kind of RPG this machine could use. Third Edition rules, fantastic graphics and story, and a fantasy world only the mind of Gary Gygax could create. If games like this don't come out on PS2 or DC, those consoles will suffer when X-Box starts pumping them out.



5 Poy Poy

Laugh and I will have to will you to spontaneously combust. *Poy Poy* was one of the most underrated games on the PlayStation. *Mario Party*? Bah. *Bomberman*? Please... *Poy Poy* blows it away. The best multiplayer experience on the PSX needs a shot at the PS2. Help us out, Konami...

6 Fallout

Interplay's exciting post-nuclear follow-up to the classic *Wasteland* is the kind of RPG that is glaringly missing on the home console. Travel the radioactive tundra that used to be Southern California and mow down mutants with your portable chain gun.

7 Castlevania

Ok, odds are that a *Castlevania* game is in the works already, but there is a twist to my request: I want it in 2D!!! 3D ruined just about every 2D franchise and I would bet that 3D will screw up *Castlevania*, too (N64 flashbacks, egad!).

8 Tobal

We were denied part two here in the states and I think it is time to give a li'l sumthin' to the people. So far ahead of their time were these two games that even the current crop of PlayStation games pale in comparison.

9 MediEvil

The most original and enjoyable franchise on the PlayStation. The visual style of this begs to be done on the PS2. And maybe they could use a bit of that power to get some better camera agles going.

10 Mutant League Football

Or hockey, for that matter. I can only imagine the *Madden 2001* engine powering a football title with monsters as players and land mines on the field. Just don't implement anything connected to *Rock the Rink*...



Eggo's PS2 Most Wanted List

It was actually hard for me to come up with 10 sequels I'd like to see on PS2 that haven't been confirmed yet. I'm already looking forward to projects in the works such as *Ninja Gaiden, Monster Rancher 3, Metal Gear Solid 2*, and *Final Fantasy X*.



1 Pirates!

The Judge and I have mentioned more than once how we would LOVE to see another Sid Meier's *Pirates* game on a next-generation console... assuming it was done right. C'mon, Sid, cut the *Alpha Centauri* and bring on the 2000 poly mayors' daughters!



2 Resident Evil –1

Recently we've seen *RE3*, *RE: Code Veronica*, and *RE Zero*. To avoid the confusion of *RE4* or *5*, the natural progression dictates *Resident Evil Negative One* be the next chapter in the Raccoon City saga. Just don't take a cue from *Onimusha* and use pre-rendered backgrounds again!



3 Tenchu 3

The two Tenchu games we saw over here suffered from two tragic flaws-bad graphics and poor camera angles. With the poly-pushing muscle of the PS2, hopefully the third *Tenchu* game can have great graphics **and** solid gameplay.



4 Deception 4

Deception is the most under-rated game series on PS. Poor sales, marketing, and graphics have kept these games low-key, but they're still worth playing. Hopefully, my dreams of a fourth Deception game with better graphics are not just a dark delusion.



5 Legend of Dragoon 2

I loved Sony's spin on the cinematic RPG. It wasn't the most original story in an RPG, but the gameplay was refreshing and fun. Lackluster sales in Japan make a sequel doubtful, but strong sales in the U.S. sure help a lot.



6 Harvest Moon

What better way to harness the raw processing power of the PS2 than to sculpt some really cool chickens or a 3000 poly cow? That's what I want to see. A game that doesn't care about frame-rates, time-elapsed hidden characters, or multi-player options. I just want a midnight rendezvous with Karen in a 128-bit vineyard.



7 Rayman

Ubi's limbless superhero has had outings on countless consoles. It's a no-brainer that he's making a special appearance on PS2. I only hope it's an original outing, as opposed to a standard piece of shovelware which the PS2 is bound to attract.



8 Star Ocean 3

Tri-Ace (developers of *Star Ocean* and *Valkyrie Profile*) are rumored to be working on a *Star Ocean 3* for PS2, although an official announcement and release date are still pending. I can't wait. I've still got another 79 endings to go in *Star Ocean 2*.



9 Diablo 2

My favorite PC game right now is *Diablo II*, which has resulted in many a sleepless night. While Bill Roper (the game's producer) has said there are no plans for a console port right now, I still dream of someday playing *DII* with friends who don't own a PC.



10 Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2

Forget that *Soul Reaver* nonsense. *Legacy of Kain* was all about *Blood Omen*, the 2D vampire adventure. I want to suck the blood from shackled maidens, transform into a wolf, and spread my own brand of justice to the world... all in the name of vengeance. I long to cry "Vae Victus!" one more time.



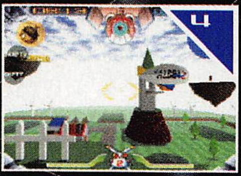
Fury's PS2 Most Wanted List

Sure, most of my selections were the obvious, things like a Castlevania game and Strider, of course. But others, like a new *Jumping Flash* (sorry Sony, *Robbit Mon Dieu* just didn't suffice), a revamped *Spyro* (hey, you just try and find me a better looking 3D platformer on PS) and *Klonoa* (uhh, WonderSwan...no) are begging for true updates.





















1 Castlevania
After dropping the ball on *Castlevania* for Dreamcast, I was skeptical whether Konami would update their devilish franchise with a "true" next gen sequel... hell, something, anything to help wipe the taste away from *Castlevania* 64. But a PS2 sequel to *Symphony of the Night*—I just feel like I'm asking too much here.

2 Klonoa
Namco's own Mario? That's right, *Klonoa* (whatever species he might have been) had heart and enough visual flair to keep up with the best gaming mascots out there. A recent Wonderswan version was a nice appetizer, but how about the main course, Namco? 2.5D platforming on the PS2... pretty please!

3 Dino Crisis
After seeing *Onimusha* at E3, the thought of *Dino Crisis* running on that same engine brings tears to my eyes. Mix in the non-stop action and less puzzle solving elements of *DC2*, and we're talking *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* the way it should have been.

4 Jumping Flash
A 3D platformer in the first person perspective where the goal is to leap to numerous sky high structures and save jellyfish like creatures called Muu-Muus... are ya with me so far? Ok, so *Robbit Mon Dieu* (aka *JF3*) was a pile, but could have easily been rectified with some killer new graphics. An odd PS2 hopeful but awesome nevertheless!

5 Medal of Honor
If Dale Dye can do such a good job whipping the allies into shape for the PS, god knows what wonders he can pull off on the PS2. Besides, can you imagine what it's like to mow down Nazis when they're made of a million plus polygons?

6 Mega Man
Whether Rockman appears in his classic 2D format or Legends offbeat 3D world, I'll gladly take whatever Capcom has in mind. The only question—do you prefer hand drawn Mega Man or the beautifully rendered version we got in *Cannon Spike*?

7 Strider
Strider Strider... not that I needed to beat it into your heads or anything.

8 Crash Team Racing
One of the only games that I can safely say I'm quite good at, was without a doubt the best cart racer since the original *Mario Kart*. If Naughty Dog could swing a PS2 update, I might just buy Jason Rubin some shiny new rims for his Ferrari F50... couldn't be that expensive right?

9 Spyro
While the pint sized dragon's antics haven't really changed much throughout the *Spyro* series, Insomniac definitely gets a major nod for crafting some of the best looking PS games ever! Cut them loose on the PS2 TOOL kit though, and we might just see lightning strike twice.

10 Street Fighter EX
If any one man can completely rework a *Street Fighter* game, it's gotta be Akira Nishitani (the father of *SF*). While I still want Capcom to churn out the 2D goods long into the future, it's due time the EX series got a **serious** 128-bit facelift (far beyond that of EX3)... and hey, let's try and keep the slowdown to a minimum.





Kodomo's PS2 Most Wanted List

I still consider it a wrong against humanity that *Tobal 2* was left stranded in the land of the rising sun. The only way I will forgive Square for this injustice is if I see some sequels that I really care about on PS2: another *Tobal*, *Front Mission*, or *Final Fantasy Tactics*!



1 Tobal
The best sequel ever made of a fantastic original game was never released in the states and, as I clutch my import copy of *Tobal 2*, I can only wonder what Dream Factory could do with a PS2. How does a top-notch 128-bit fighter with a massive, RPG-inspired dungeon sound?

2 Front Mission
At this very moment, *FM3* eats away more of my sleeping hours than anything else. My only gripe is the dated visuals, which could be upgraded to a level that compares to the depth of the actual strategy involved.

3 Final Fantasy Tactics
Arguably the best turn-based strategy game to date, *FFT* made a believer out of me and created one of the best experiences around. Square can churn out all the *FF* drivel that they want, just make a damn *FFT* game for PS2!

4 Colin McRae's Rally
The rally game that has it all just needs a few things to bring it to the next level (cue shameless clichés now...). The physics engine could greatly benefit from the PS2's number crunching prowess, while the obvious graphical upgrade would make it a must buy.

5 Tekken
Okay, so nothing's concrete as of yet, but Namco must make a true sequel to *Tekken 3*. My advice: Dump the tag feature, reduce the number of redundant characters and integrate fully 3D backgrounds for the first time in the series.

6 Crash Team Racing
Yes, it's a straight rip of *Mario Kart*, but *CTR* actually brought a few new things to the table. I'm not much for Crash as a mascot, but this was the best kart racer on the PS and deserves an upgrade.

7 Shadowrun
Perhaps one of the most underrated series around (both the Genesis and SNES versions were amazing), *Shadowrun* popularized 'jacking into the matrix' long before Keanu. Gimme a fully 3D, dingy futurescape and crazy missions to keep me a happy child.

8 Macross
Yeah, I know, Bandai's *Macross* games are well known for one thing: sucking horribly. Still, the optimist in me yearns for an upgrade done by competent programmers who actually understand what gameplay is.

9 Ghost in the Shell
While the original PS game focused primarily on the Fuchikoma tanks (noticeably absent from the anime...), I'd like to see a sequel that incorporates that feature along with 3D action elements. Motoko Kusanagi assassinating... err, 'reeducating' rogue officials in the future, sounds like a winner to me.

10 Akira
Why the hell not? If the Judge can lust over *Starship Troopers*, I'm going to beg for a cell shaded *Akira* game. Katsushiro Otomo's epic would translate well, with motorcycle racing against Joker and the Clown Gang, fighting against Tetsuo and even running from the Military. A good *Akira* game would go a long way.



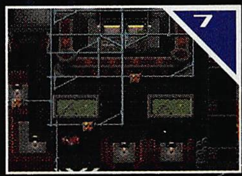










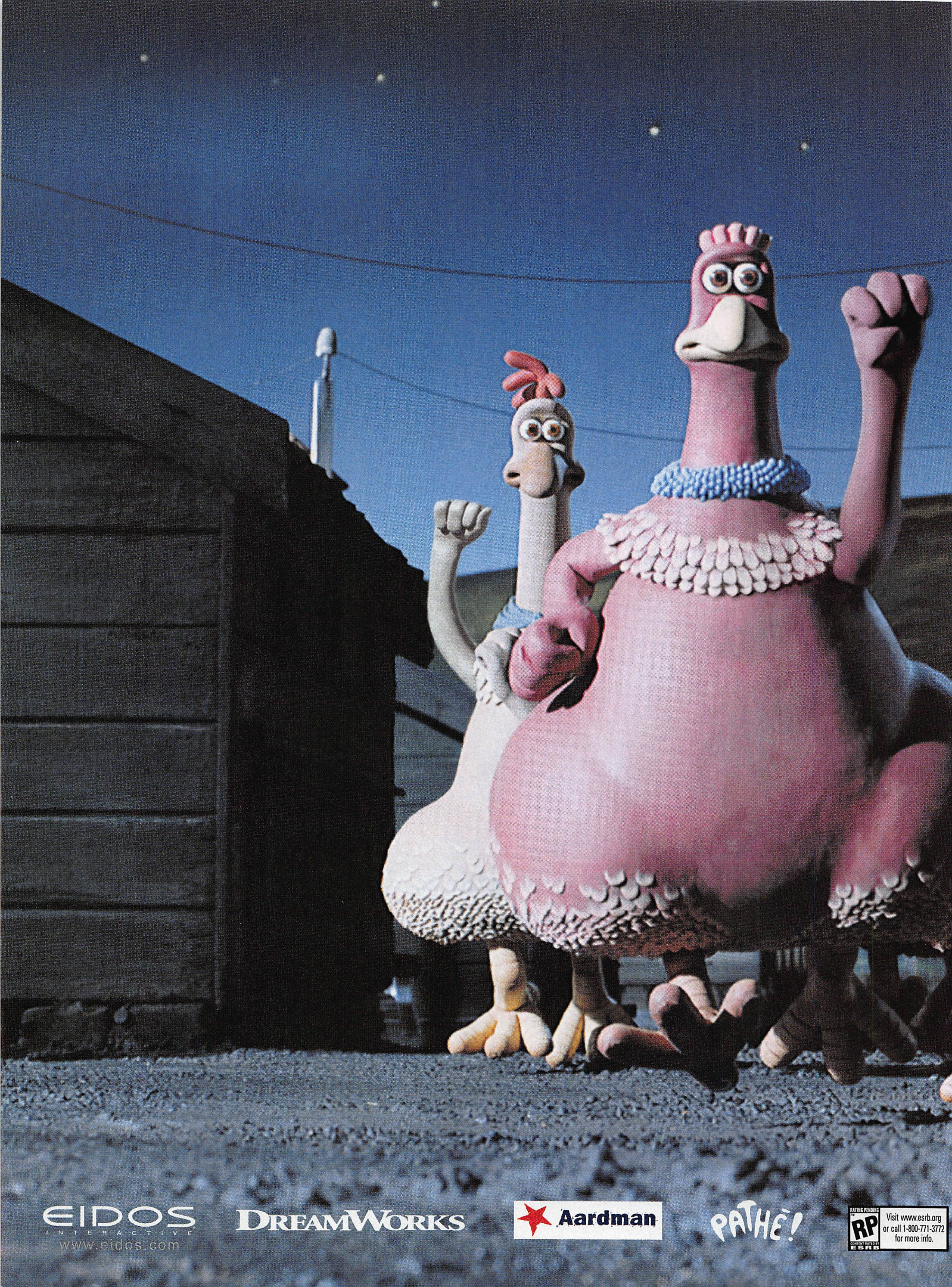


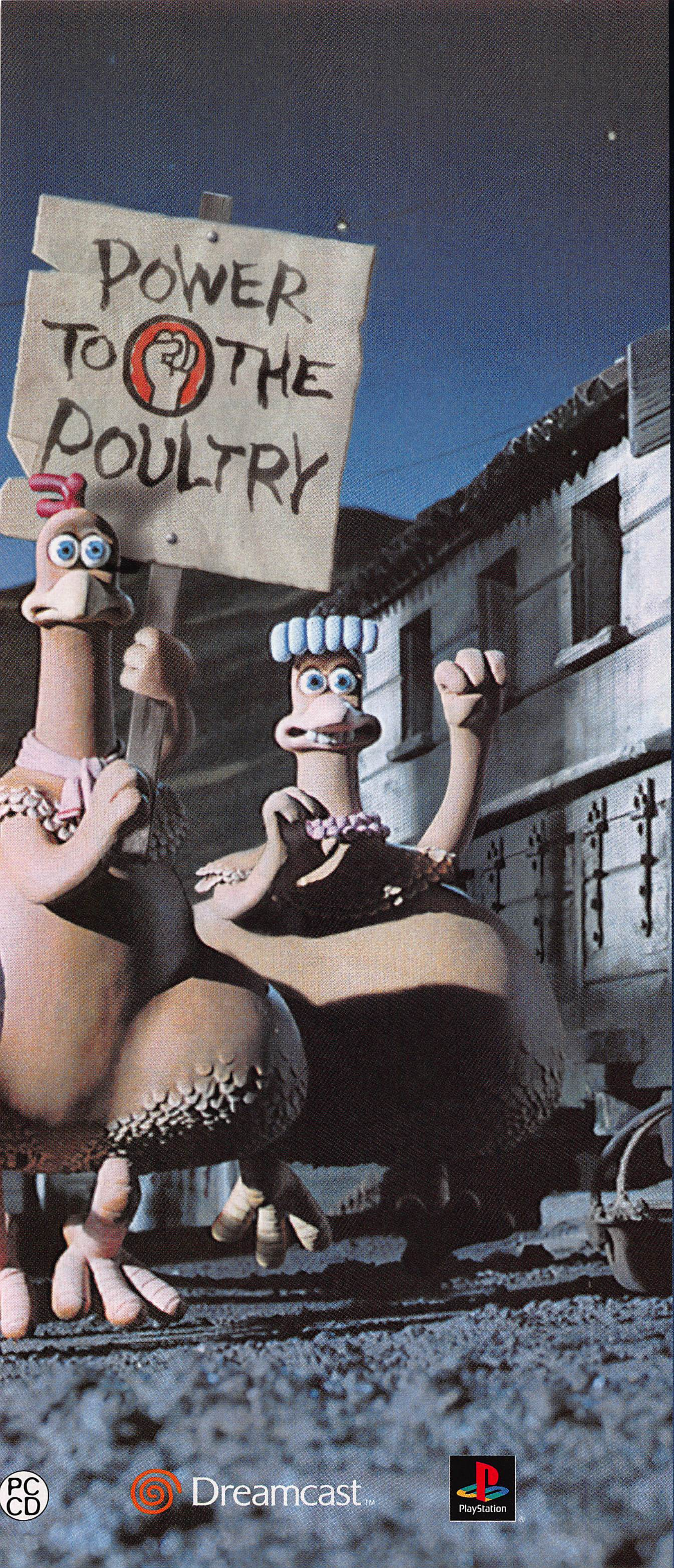


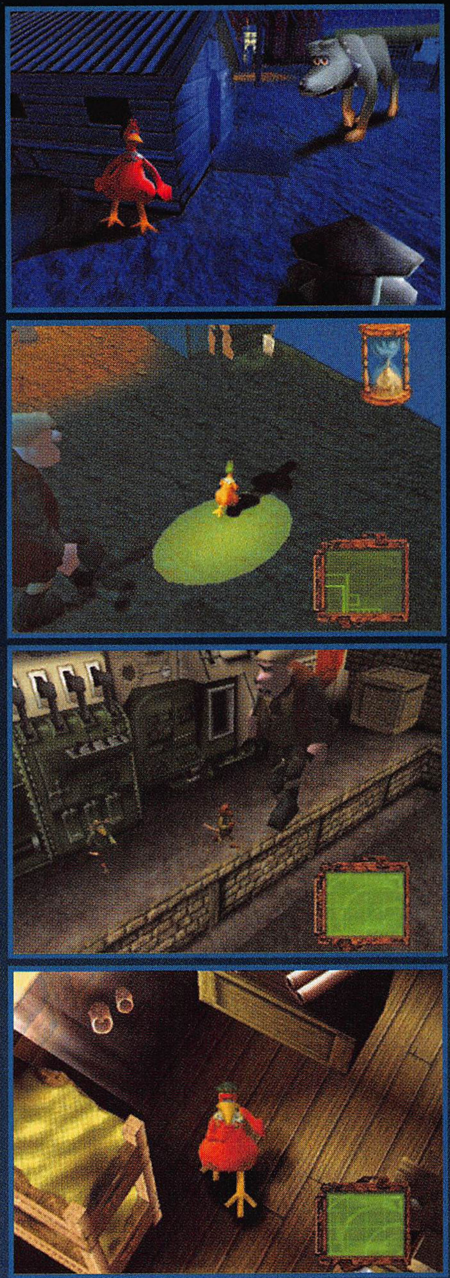







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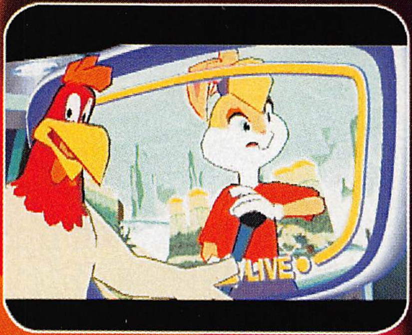
I Got A Knack For This Sort of Thing

Some developers just have it. On PlayStation, Naughty Dog 'had it.' On Saturn, Treasure 'had it.' And on Dreamcast Melbourne House 'has it'...in spades. Not only have they forced the machine to perform (I figure against its will) things that it shouldn't have any right doing until its matured a bit, but they make it look so *easy*—we're talkin' even Fury could waltz through a game easy. Which makes it even more unbelievable that their next, Dreamcast-exclusive (yeah, an exclusive 3rd party game—will wonders never cease?) project, might even be... better?





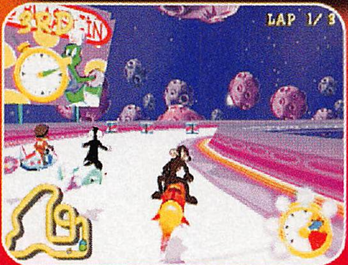
Yeah, I found that to be a pretty difficult pill to swallow as well (though I suppose it did have a nice sugary coating)—and you would too if you'd basked in the graphical might of *Test Drive LeMans* as I have, daily, for the past two months. While I won't comment on the gameplay yet, I will say that even sans a solid 60hz update speed, *TDL* might just eclipse the visually stupefying *Ferrari F355*. While Fury went into great detail about the sites, sounds, and spectacle that is that game, let me just say that simple MPEGs of the game in action online spectacularly fail to do it justice... which makes it even harder to believe that their next game might wind up eclipsing it—say hello to *Looney Tunes Space Race*. Check your jaw at the door...

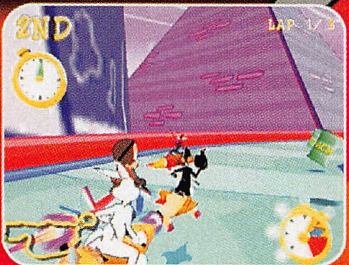


Getting to Know You

For those of you that know me fairly well, you're no doubt familiar with the fact that I've grown increasingly disenchanted with the cart racing genre over the past two years—another way to put it would be that I can't stand the g*d d*mn genre anymore... but we're a family magazine, so I'll refrain. As well, you're also probably aware that if I'm going to play a racing game, it had better be a simple, arcade-tuned, adrenaline-erupting speed demon... which is where I begin to lose interest in games like *LeMans* and *Ferrari*—sure, they look, well, godly, but







EXCLUSIVE	ECM: ***THAT'S*** NOT A CART RACER—***THIS*** IS A CART RACER!	DEVELOPER - MELBOURNE HOUSE	1-4 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - INFOGRAMES	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR

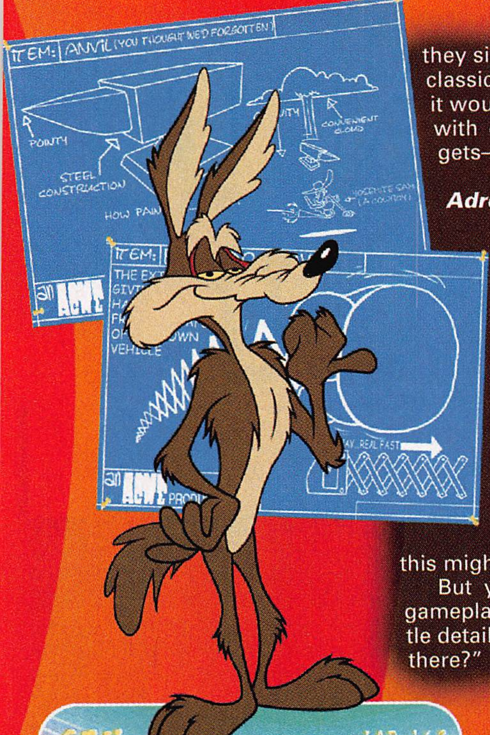
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they simply don't have that simple, arcade hook that the classic *Daytona* and PS *Rage Racer* possess. However, it would appear that A) not only am I over my little spat with cart racers, but B) this game is as arcade as it gets—and for a cart racer, that's saying a lot.

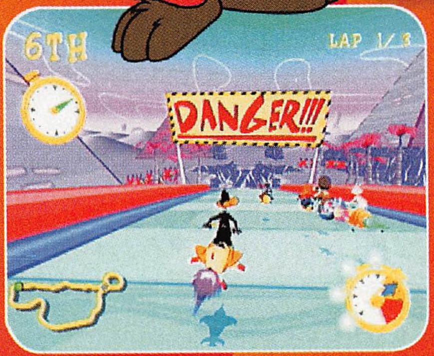


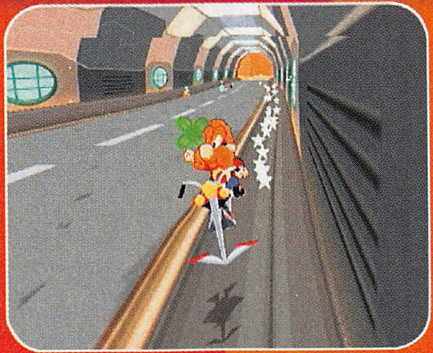
Adrenaline Junkies Need Apply

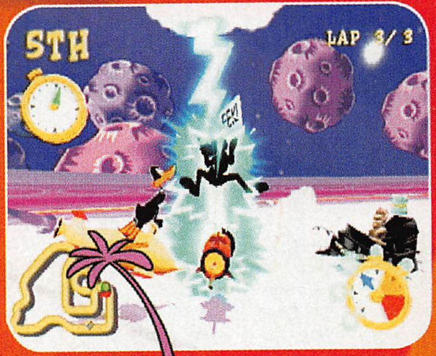
While the play mechanics themselves are early, it's clear that cart fans are in for something special—especially DC cart fans that were 'gifted' with the hellish *Wacky Races* earlier on (do you think maybe none of our competition played that game when they reviewed it? I'd say 'yes') and the marginal *Disney Racing* from Crystal Dynamics (better than *WR*, but that's not something you boast about). Currently it doesn't feature any crazy power-slide technique a la *Crash Team Racing* but what it does feature is some intense, neck-'n-neck racing and some wicked shortcuts where you'll careen across huge portions of the track without touching down. As long as the mechanics receive some spit and polish in the final rev, this might be the next big thing on DC.



But you're probably not really all that concerned with the gameplay right now, are ya? No, you want to know the sticky little details like "How's the frame rate?" and "How much draw-in is there?" And the answers would be "Pretty solid." and "Virtually







non-existent." Even though *LTSR* has **a lot** of time to go in development, it's quite clear the they're shooting for the 60hz that they felt they had to axe in *LeMans*.

While the game does suffer from the occasional slowdown, it does run at well above 30hz 90% of the time, and with some tweaking it should easily reach the lofty heights of Ferrari F355 territory.

As for the draw distance, there is still some big 'pops' in the distance, particularly in (big surprise) the more geometrically complex levels. Certain levels, however, allow you to see the track stretching all the way to the horizon, back into the screen, and back to the horizon again—it was enough to send chills down our collective spines at one point. Again, with the bare minimum of system optimization pop-up could easily disappear completely.

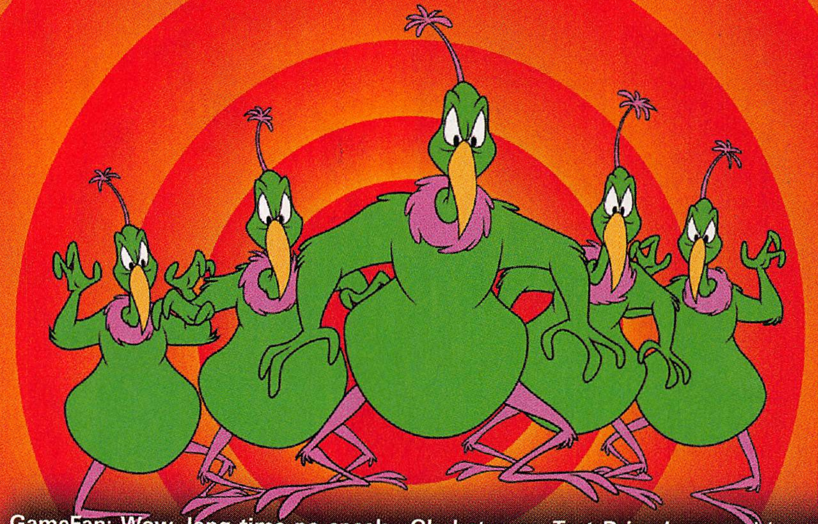


Got Valium?

Do you think we're excited about *Looney Tunes Space Race*? Does Eggo like little girls? Do I need to say more? I do? Well, OK: Needless to say this could prove to be one of the single most impressive DC efforts ever, and this is only one of the first two games from Australia-based Melbourne House showing their DC muscles—flex for us guys, <grrrr>... Anybody else think that some acquisition action by Sega might be in order? Is Melbourne House the next AM2, Visual Concepts or No Cliche? "Mmmmm... Could be!" **ECM**







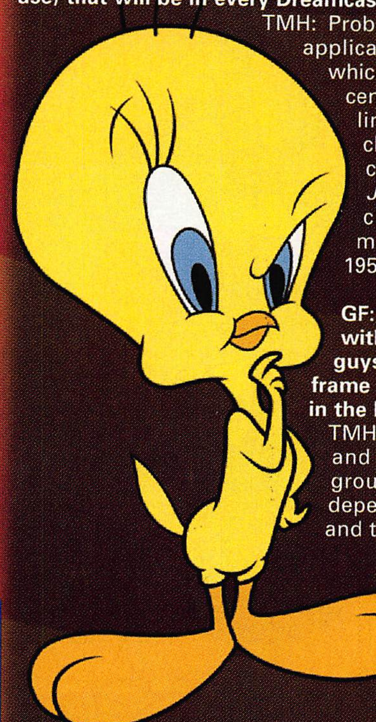
TUNIN' IN

GameFan chats with *Looney Tunes Space Race* developer Team Melbourne House

GameFan: Wow, long time no speak. Ok, between *Test Drive Le Mans* and *Loony Tunes Space Race*, you guys must have a pretty large development staff. How exactly are the various teams at Melbourne House broken up?
Team Melbourne House: The majority of staff were divided between the dev teams for those two projects, with *Looney* being the larger group mainly because of the huge graphics and animation requirements. We also have a separate Technical Design Group which does R&D and specific problem-solving for both projects. Oh, and a few staff are squirelled away working on our cool new secret projects!

GF: When Infogrames PR stopped by our office, they were quick to point out that they don't consider *LTSR* a kart racer, but rather more along the lines of *Jet Moto*. What's your take on that?
TMH: In terms of look and feel (ie. the overall 'fun' factor) we were working with a 'kart racer' mentality, but having hover-vehicles certainly did change things somewhat. Going back and playing various kart games now, it's obvious that we've produced something much faster and more frenetic, but still with that sense of fun. A lot of people now tend to think of it along the lines of *Wipeout* with laughs.

GF: The cel shading in this game looks great, but do you feel that this technique will soon become the new "lens flare" (i.e., the development technique which overstays its welcome due to overuse) that will be in every Dreamcast game from here on out?
TMH: Probably not, since it's really only applicable to cartoon-style games, which make up only a small percentage of the overall Dreamcast line-up. Frankly, we didn't choose cel style because it's the cool thing right now (what with *Jet Grind Radio* and all)—we chose it because it exactly matches the look and feel of the 1950s Warner Bros. cartoons.



GF: We were also really impressed with the backgrounds. Did you guys have to compromise the frame rate to inject so much insanity in the levels?
TMH: Our priority was lots of color and movement in the backgrounds. The look of the game depends so much on the animation and the style.

GF: How much of the DC's power do you feel you're utilizing here?
TMH: The Dreamcast has plenty left to offer, but it is a relatively simple platform to work with so it's not going to be that long before we wring every last ounce from it.

GF: With so many Warner Bros games available across multiple platforms, do you feel *LTSR* will stand out?
TMH: Well, we'd like to think so! As well as being great to look at, *LTSR* is also fun and challenging to play, so hopefully others will feel this way too. This is the first Looney Tunes game for Dreamcast, and we think we've brought the characters to life in a way that people haven't seen done in a game before. When the game is paused, you'd swear you were looking at a still from an original cartoon.

GF: Were you able to implement everything you wanted in the game?
TMH: Not really, but then you never do, mainly because of the inevitable time constraints. There's quite a few ideas left over that will hopefully see the light of day on future projects.

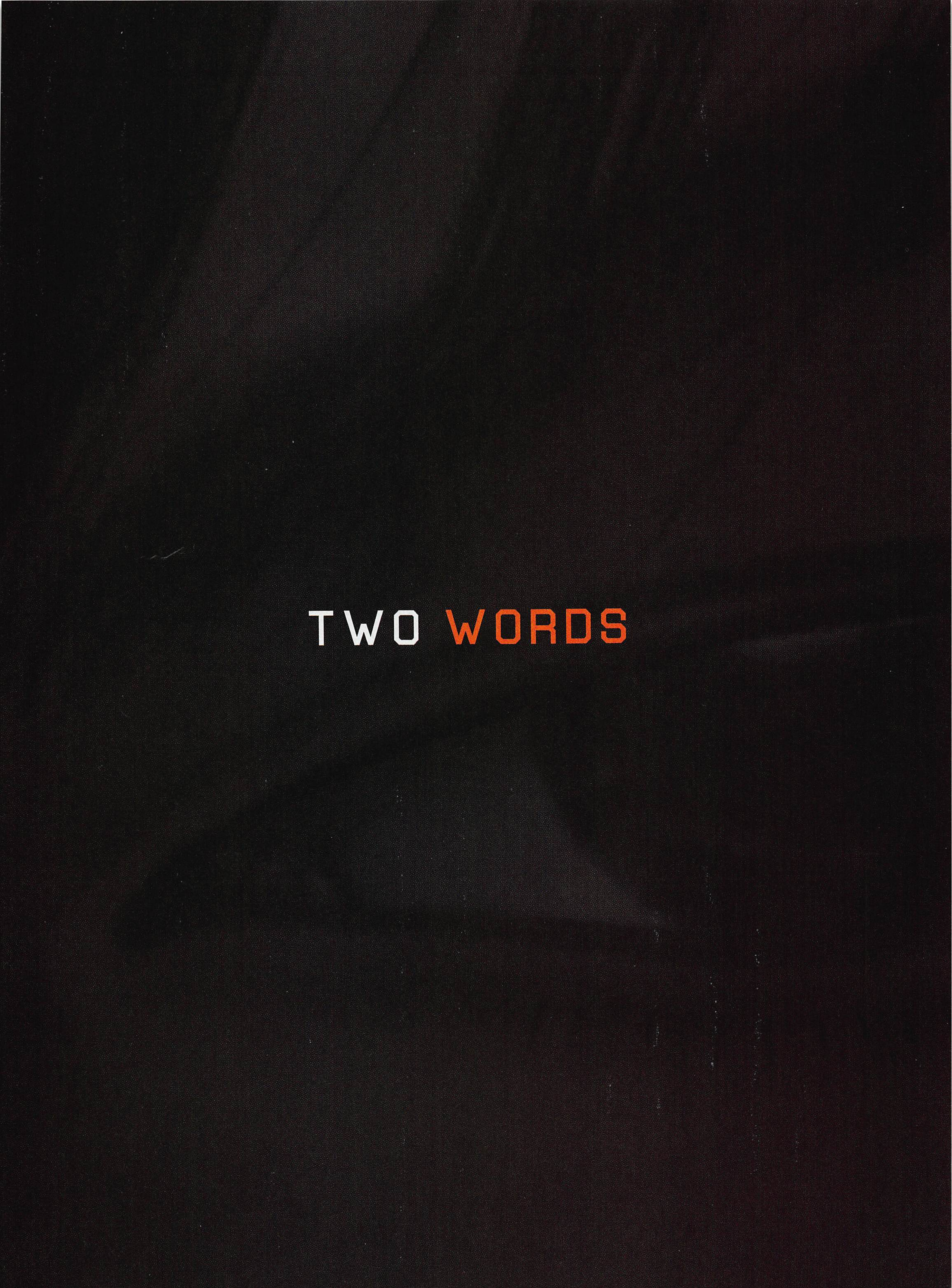
GF: How long did you guys spend doing character animation?
TMH: Character animation has been constant right through the dev cycle of this game. It was one of the first things started and even now we have a few perfectionist animators working away, putting finishing touches onto things.

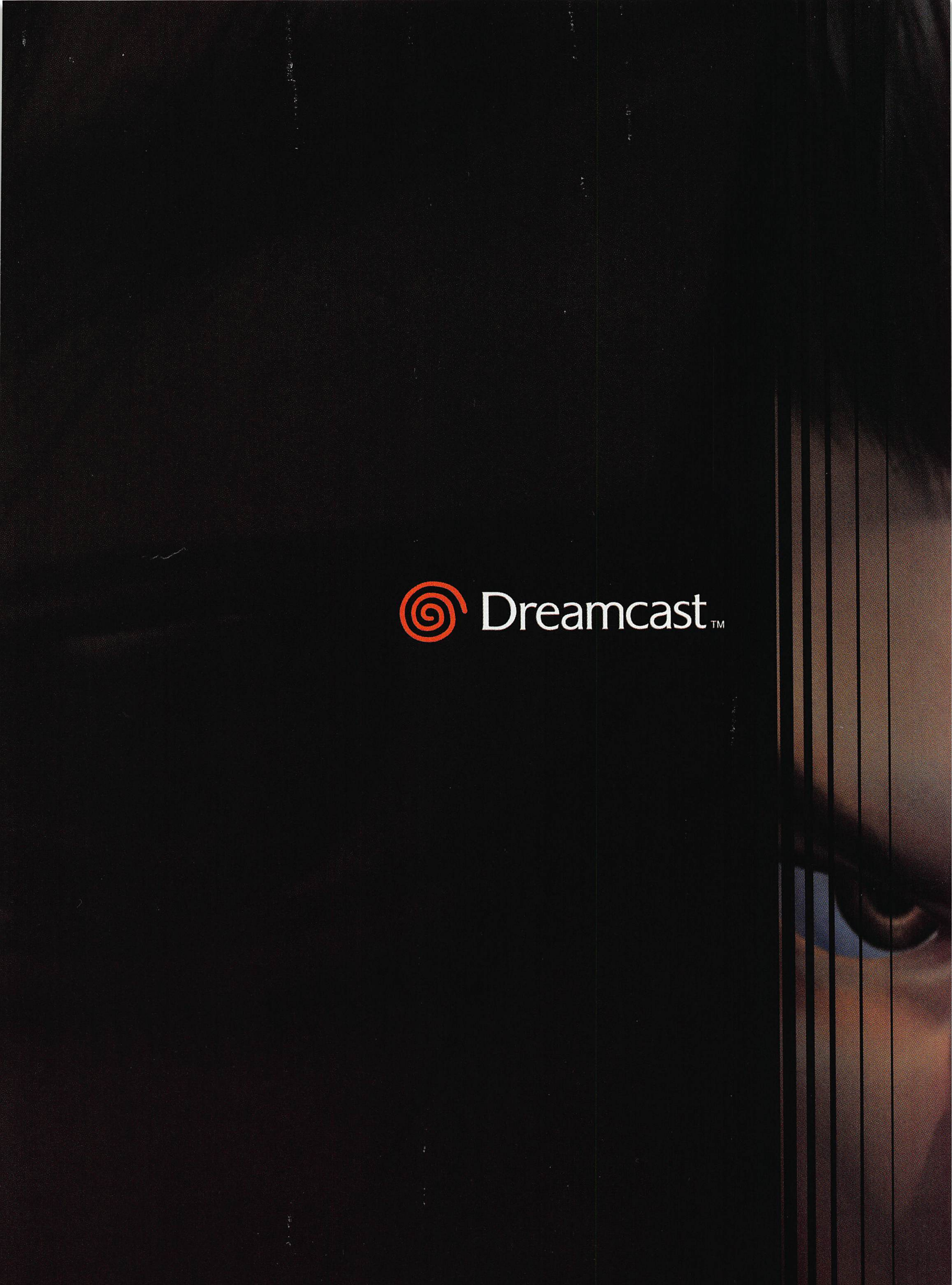
GF: Can you describe the experience working with Warner Bros, and what's their opinion of the game so far?
TMH: They love it! They've been very supportive and co-operative throughout. We worked hard to get the *Looney Tunes* style right, and consequently we've had almost no revisions. It was pretty exciting writing new dialogue for Bugs and Daffy and the gang, and getting it recorded by the Warner Bros. voice talent in Hollywood.

GF: We know your office is located in Australia; what impact have the WB cartoons had down under? Were all of the staff familiar with the old WB crew? Marvin, Yosemite Sam, Wile E., etc?
TMH: The old WB cartoons had just as much impact here as anywhere in the Western world, ie. we all grew up with them and loved them, basically! Mind you, the real Tasmanian Devil is much much smaller than Taz, and does not spin either...

GF: If you guys could resurrect any of Sega's older franchises, which ones would they be? Basically, what games do you want to see on Dreamcast?
TMH: Another *Shining Force* game would be nice, as would something set in the *Panzer Dragoon* world! Not sure if Sega developed it themselves, but an update of the Megadrive/Genesis game *Herzog Zwei* would also make quite a few people happy. *Nights* or *Burning Rangers* would be spectacular on DC. However, we're pretty content playing the new games—*Crazy Taxi* and *Space Channel 5* are the business!

GF: Any word whether you guys will be developing on any other consoles?
TMH: We have PS2 already underway, and will jump into Xbox and Game Cube as soon as the dev kits are available. We're not a one-console company—we'll go where the gamers are!


TWO WORDS


Dreamcast™



Who Are You?

For those of you completely unfamiliar with what Nuon is, well, we don't blame you. For the past 8 months we've begged, pleaded, cajoled and whimpered for even the slightest shred of help in covering this new technology, now playing in a DVD unit near you—to no avail. In fact, they were apparently coverage-allergic ("they" being VM Labs, the creator of Nuon technology), and until about two weeks ago, I'd sooner pry an apology out of Mr. Clinton for his White House, um, missteps than get even a return call from the folks at VM Labs. However, never let it be said that persistence (read annoyance) doesn't eventually pay off. Thus, we have first-ever real coverage of a Nuon game! Not excited? You should be.

For those of you that don't know—and really, you probably shouldn't—Nuon is a 'media processor.' What's that handy euphemism mean? In this case it's meant to replace the standard CPU in every DVD player currently available; what's known as an MPEG-2 decoder (MPEG-2 is the format DVDs are 'written' in, to make things real simple). A Nuon chip, however, costs about the same as an OEM's (a Toshiba, Samsung, heck, even a Sony) MPEG-2 chip with silicon that's far more advanced, allowing such neat things as 20x zoom, frame-by-frame strobe, and a gaggle of other nifty DVD video manipulation 'tricks.' It's a pretty neat-o feature set, but we're not here to talk about buying DVD players for their movie playback capabilities, no sir. We're here to discuss the fact that Nuon also plays, you guessed it, video games.

Off The Beaten (to death) Path

Now sometimes it strikes me as a little odd that originality seems to be dead in the world of 'interactive entertainment.' After all, back when graphics were composed of no more than a bunch of dully colored lines and dots, there seemed to be a lot more creativity to go around. Then I remember that gaming is now driven by the almighty dollar and marketing people—cause hey, they **know** what makes a good game (and, apparently, a web site). So nowadays, when someone actually does have the 'nerve' to develop an original concept it's almost cause to throw a party of ancient Roman proportions—and if you know what a party in ancient Rome was like...

Back to the matter of originality: since Nuon is meant to be a DVD player first and a game console second (their words, not ours), it seems that they may be a little more willing to take chances that most developers would gag on: "Aw, how about another fighting game, instead of this revolutionary new concept you're talking about?" You know what I'm talking about: the ones that would sooner approve ten new racing games than a single, genre-defying or redefining title, eschewing a chance at the brass ring for the table scraps that the big three leave behind... ya know, the visionaries <snicker>.

Which is what makes me at least apprehensively excited about Nuon: They don't seem to be terribly concerned (at least with the initial batch of games) with covering old ground—they actually seem to have staked a claim on esoteric and untried. The first title we've been fortunate to secure (thanks Tony T.) is *Freefall 3050 AD*—a game that's originality and ideas may just set a new precedent in game design.





EXCLUSIVE	ECM: LONG WAY DOWN...	DEVELOPER - TAKS	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - VM LABS	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR

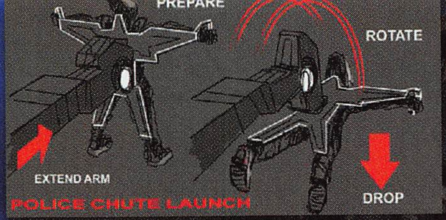
How Do You Spell Originality? T-A-K-S

TAKS (**T**otal **ArK**ade **S**oftware) is the UK dev outfit responsible for *Freefall*. Eschewing the traditional genres on their first game, *Freefall* can best be described as *Pilotwings* meets *Quake*. Naturally that's a gross over-simplification but that's really the only way to adequately convey what *Freefall* is, in the most basic of terms. Intrigued? If you have a pulse you should be...

Imagine plummeting thousands of feet straight down a near-bottomless chasm at unearthly velocities spinning, twisting and turning a mind bending 360° while a legion of lawless interlopers and hoodlums seeks to do you in with lasers, bombs, and good ol' fashioned kamikaze-style attacks. Did I also mention that you're under the gun in regards to a limited air supply, your survival hinges on reaching the bottom, not only in something at least tenuously resembling one piece, but before your less-than-ample air supply runs dry? Oh, and lest I forget, the spinning blades, electrical fields, billboards and taxi stands (among other obstacles that may prove fatal to someone dropping at speeds in excess of 100 MPH) that will make life that much more interesting for our intrepid police officer.

That's right, you're out to clean up the streets (err, skies, I suppose) of all the trash you can take out with your blaster and hand(y) grenades. As you might expect, the odds are slightly against you and *Freefall* is **not** an easy game. In addition to coming to grips with the unique gameplay (this game is screaming for a PS-style dual analog stick), your foe is generally an unrelenting lot, and has no problem shelling you as your ugly carcass bounces from wall to wall as you plummet to your doom—and believe me, it will be really ugly the first 10-12 times you play. I sat Eggo and Fury down with this game and (not surprisingly... at least in Fury's case) they looked more like a corpse being dumped from a plane at 35k feet than the ninja gamers we know they both are (at least in Eggo's case). It was like watching a kid with socks on his hands try to make peanut butter and jelly sandwich—in other words it was ugly and very, very messy.

However, given enough time to come to grips with the play mechanics (you have to hold down the right shoulder button or z-button to enable full 6-degree movement—like I said, an extra stick would have come in very handy), I predict that even Fury will move like an accomplished novice spinning, shooting and annihilating all with extreme prejudice.









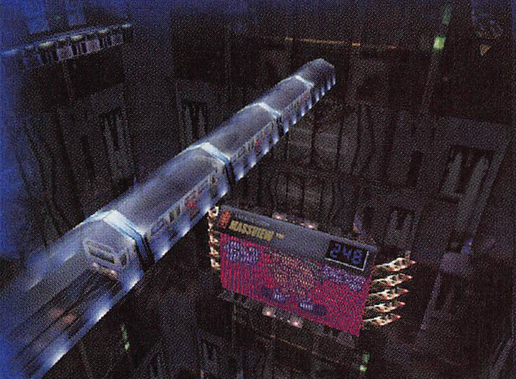
















Taking A Look Under The Hood

Since Nuon is a brand spanking new piece of hardware, I'm sure you're all jazzed to know exactly what we can expect from a graphics and sound angle. After all, not too many people get pumped over a new platform because of its exterior design or the games on it (now there's a novel idea), they want to know how many polys, the frame rate, light sources, z-buffering, clock speed and whether it'll bake bread in under one hour. Needless to say, in this day of million polys per second games and frame rates that routinely break smash the 30hz barrier on their way to a eye-burning 60hz makes this at least a slightly valid question.

And the answer: while *Freefall* does look good, it's got nothing on next-gen fare on Dreamcast or PS2. Chalk this up to the Nuon's inherent lack of a dedicated 3D rendering engine (it's a "jack of all trades, master of none" type deal), as the graphics are a step up from N64 but a step below the newest consoles.

Textures suffer to some degree from the same problems as the N64, with smaller tile sizes getting blown up to mammoth proportions to save on memory, and there is a decided lack of filtering effects (something that was recently remedied via Nuon's SDK, but too late in *Freefall*'s dev cycle to be corrected). So what you get with *Freefall* is a decent-looking game, but not something that's not going to set new precedents or really drop any jaws. Which is fine, since not every game can be *Ferrari F355*.

It runs smoothly (anywhere from 25-35 fps) and looks decent, with vivid colors and solid animation—though hopefully by the time the review copy rolls around, the animation will be improved across the board. As it stands right now, everything moves with a rather stiff gait and could benefit from some extra TLC.

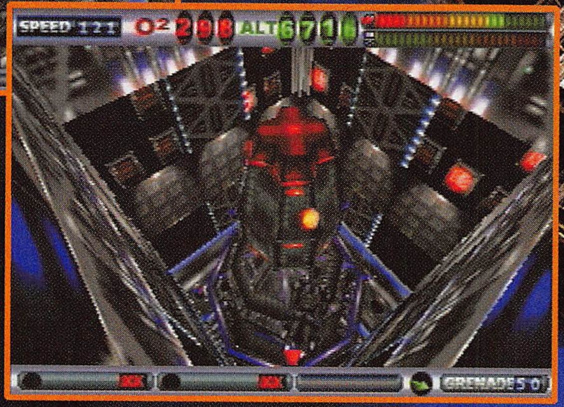
As for sound effects, they get the job done and hopefully (as with the character animation) will get a boost in the final. The music, however, is stunning. Ripping techno tracks complement the frenetic, freefall gameplay to a tee. It's a lot like something you might expect to go with an extreme sports type game—which is apt, given the style of gameplay.



Nuon: Friend or Enemy?

So the big question is: do I buy a Nuon to play this game? In other words, is the game worth the cost of the title ($29.99) plus the price of the player (anywhere from $199.99 for a no-name player up to about $299.99 for a brand name such as Samsung or Toshiba). Well, I'm not going to tell you that... yet. Since the game has some time left in development, you're going to have to hold out till next month for the first review. By then, we should also have the first look (God-willing) of Jeff Minter's newest opus, *Tempest 3000*, to help make that decision a little easier. For now, I'm off to play a little more *Freefall* and use that handy little 20x zoom feature to take a closer look at the sunsets in the latest Sports Illustrated swimsuit DVD... **ECM**



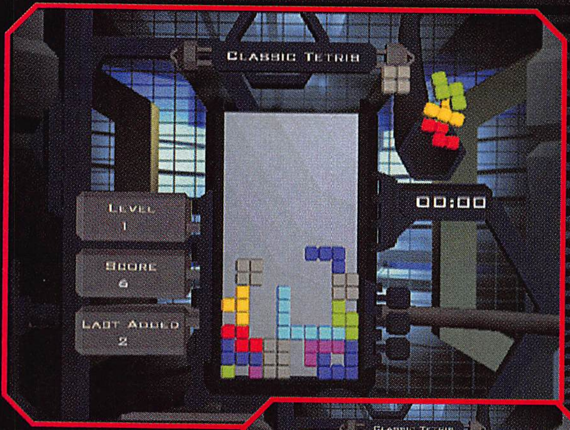


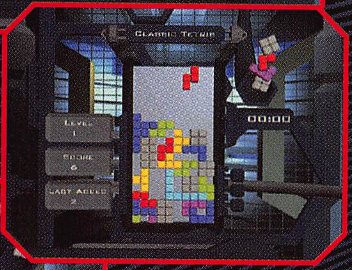


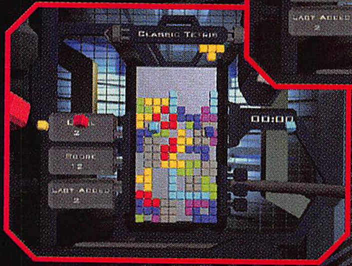

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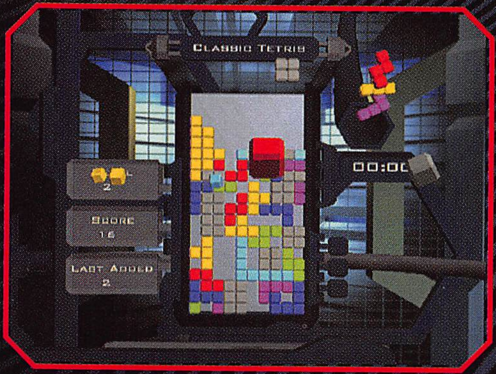






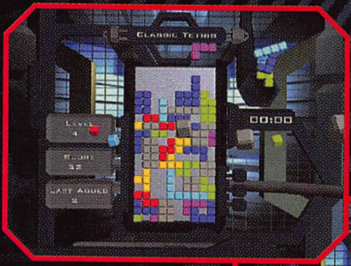
Nowadays, making a great puzzle game has become a lost art like alchemy. Try as developers might to mix together ingredients like simplicity, addictiveness, depth, and challenge, the resulting concoction is seldom desirable. Around these parts, the word "sequel" is usually associated with terms like "cash run" and "milking it," but the one category in which I can look the other way is puzzle games. Why? Because the *Devil Dices*, *Ballistics*, and *Mr. Drillers* of the world don't compare with timeless classics like *Tetris*, *Bust a Move*, and *Puyo Puyo*. So if the industry can't produce a game that's better than something as archaic as *Tetris* (*Devil Dice* and *Ballistic* are good, but not spectacular), then I'm more than happy to go back and play Old Faithful on my Dreamcast, especially if it features online play. On a side note, I am hoping to some day exact online revenge on Tao for dominating the high score rankings of my Game Boy *Tetris DX* (thus preventing me from entering my name in the top scores). Your day will come, *Tetris* master. Oh yes, it will...

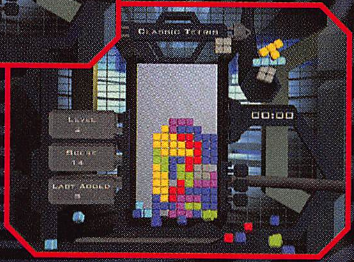
THE NEXT TETRIS™ NET EDITION

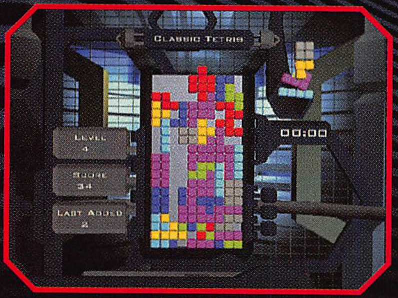


The name of the game is *Tetris*, and if you've never heard of it, you shouldn't be reading this magazine. More specifically, this is *The Next Tetris*, the variant that graced the PlayStation a while back. It features tweaked gameplay features such as colored blocks within the pieces which tend to 'fall apart' or 'drop off' if you dangle them over an edge. Like *Super Puzzle Fighter*, colored pieces tend to glob together if they land next to a piece of the same color.

Any others of you out there world-class *Tetris* players? Superhuman gamers sent by god himself to walk this world solely to school would-be *Tetris* aficionados? You can go for hours until finally succumbing to the dreaded 'blink?' Well, self-proclaimed *Tetris* deities, here's a chance to prove once and for all your mastery of the most popular puzzle game of all time. Global domination? Up until now, it was only something ECM dreamed of. Now, *The Next Tetris: Net Edition* offers you the chance to make those outlandish claims of dominance a reality. The only thing better than the post-glow satisfaction of finishing a marathon session of solo *Tetris* has got to be the dismantling of egos that can happen only over SegaNet. Even anti-social gamers can take advantage of the Dreamcast's Internet abilities by uploading high scores to the *Tetris* ladder for the whole world to gawk at and compete against.

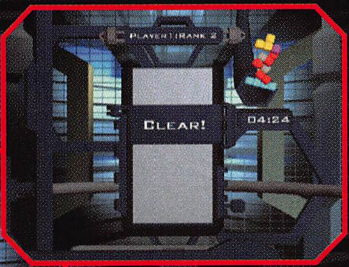




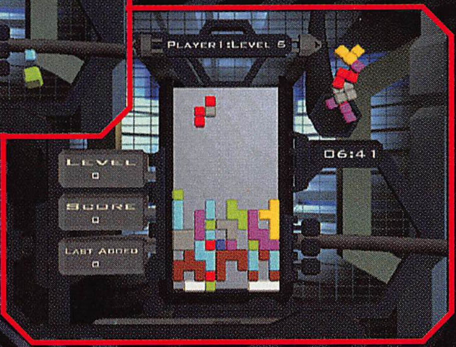


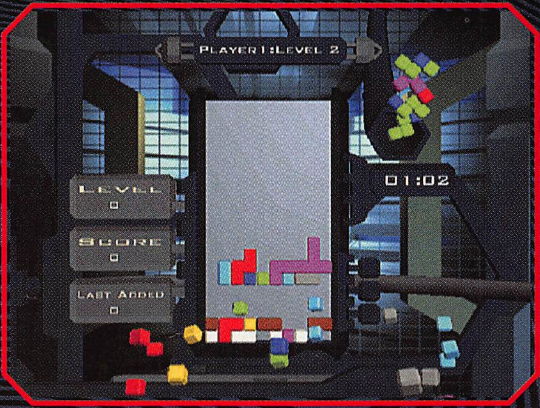
EXCLUSIVE	EGGO: I CHRISTEN THEE: "TETRIS SCRUB."	DEVELOPER - BLUE PLANET	1-2 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - CRAVE	AVAILABLE NOV

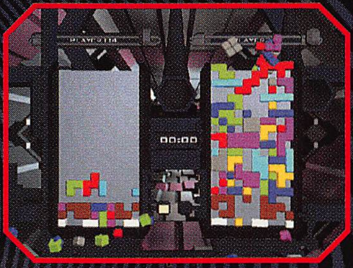
The Next Tetris: Net Edition also comes complete with all the regularly stocked bells and whistles you'd expect in a *Tetris* title: One Player, Marathon mode, Score Marathon, Practice Mode, Classic, and Versus. One Player and Practice Mode are self explanatory solo affairs. The two Marathon modes test your endurance by tallying the number of lines you can clear and keeping record of it for competition. In Versus mode, you're competing against an opponent who's right next to you onscreen. Clear more lines than your opponent and the gap is likely to widen, as you start mucking with his formerly-clean *Tetris* environment. In addition to making him claustrophobic by sending lines over, you can reverse your opponent's screen and even alter his colors (which can be disastrous as his pieces start 'falling apart' with no rhyme or reason. Of course, if you don't want to bother with all that innovation, there's always the Classic *Tetris* option, which is the original game that your grandmother plays, nothing fancy.





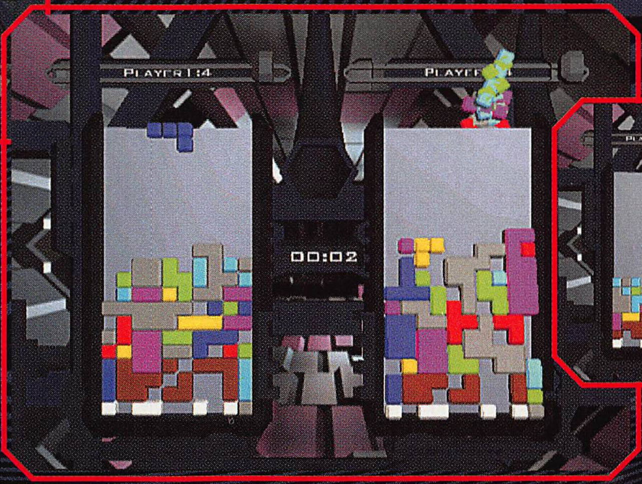


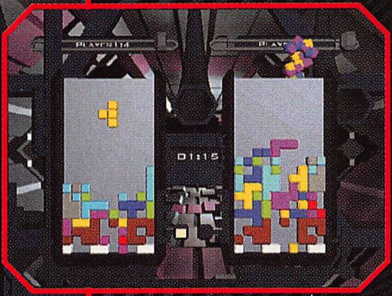




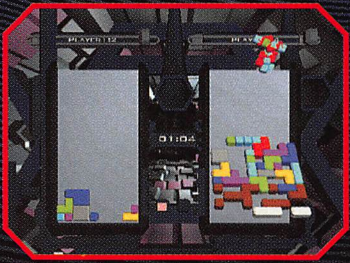






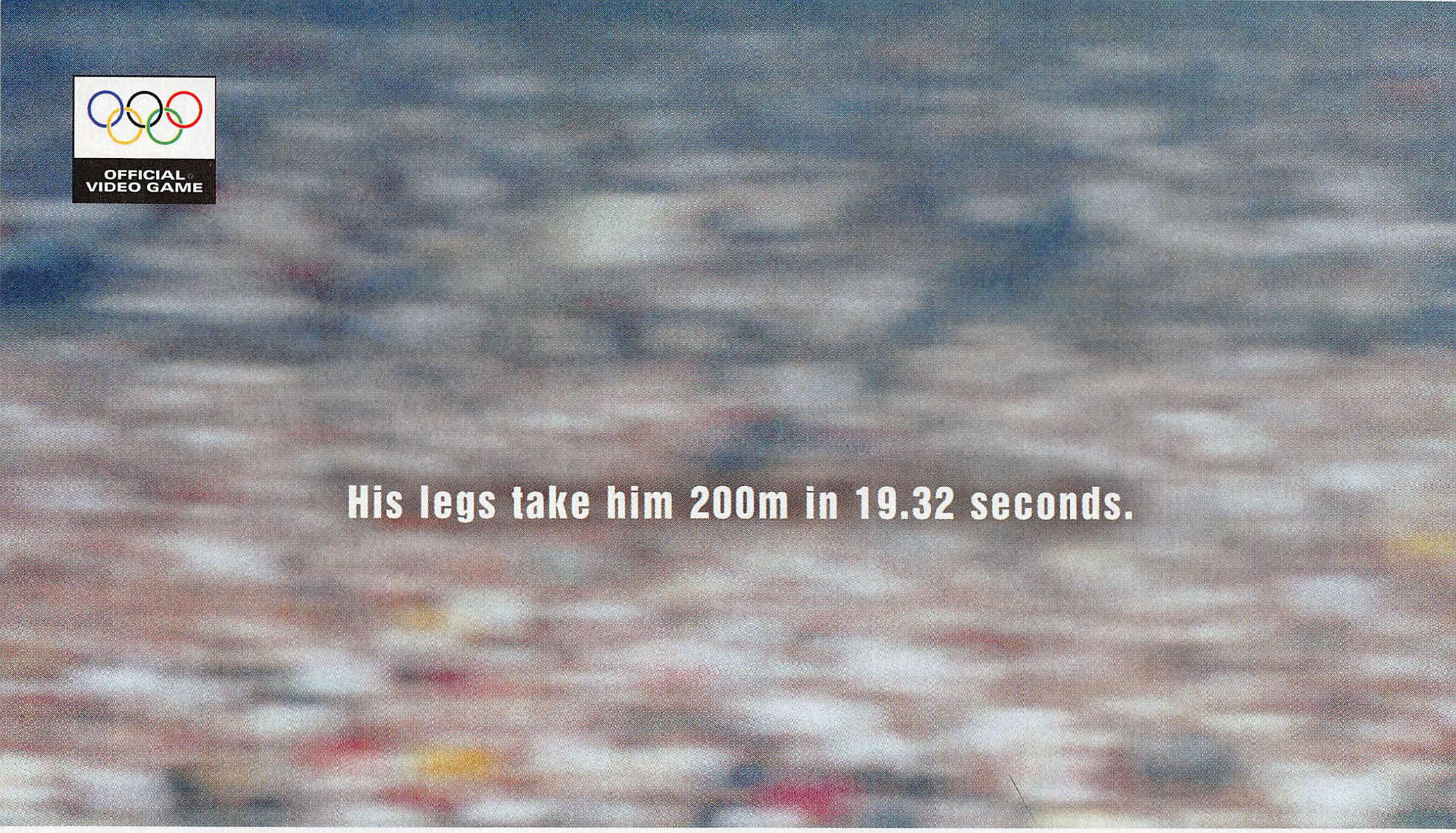






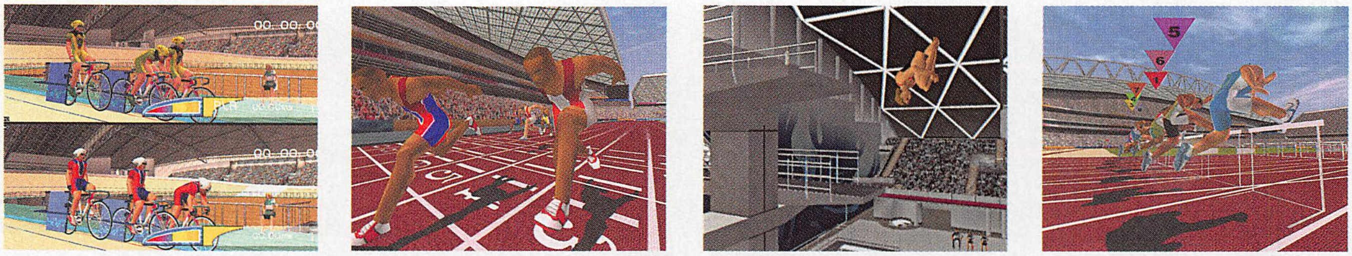
The Dreamcast rev we played is still very early (about 40%), and the multi-player code over the Internet will probably be the last feature worked on and tweaked until the product finally ships. As far as graphics go, all the falling pieces are now completely polygonal. Backgrounds are not bland affairs any more; they have flashy eye candy to divert your attention, although I recommend keeping your eyes on the pieces. There's also a recently-added, cool effect right when you finish off an opponent: all their pieces explode into the screen like a gunpowder-laced, gratuitous Hollywood action flick.

Since it's still early, Crave doesn't have specifics on plans for *The Next Tetris: Net Edition* online contests, tournaments, or ladder matches, but you can bet they're coming. With the added appeal of online gaming and the ability to bring together an underground *Tetris* community, it's only a matter of time before the company announces some big get-together opportunity for all you crazy *Tetris*-heads. We'll keep you posted as the latest news drops in. E



How fast are your fingers?

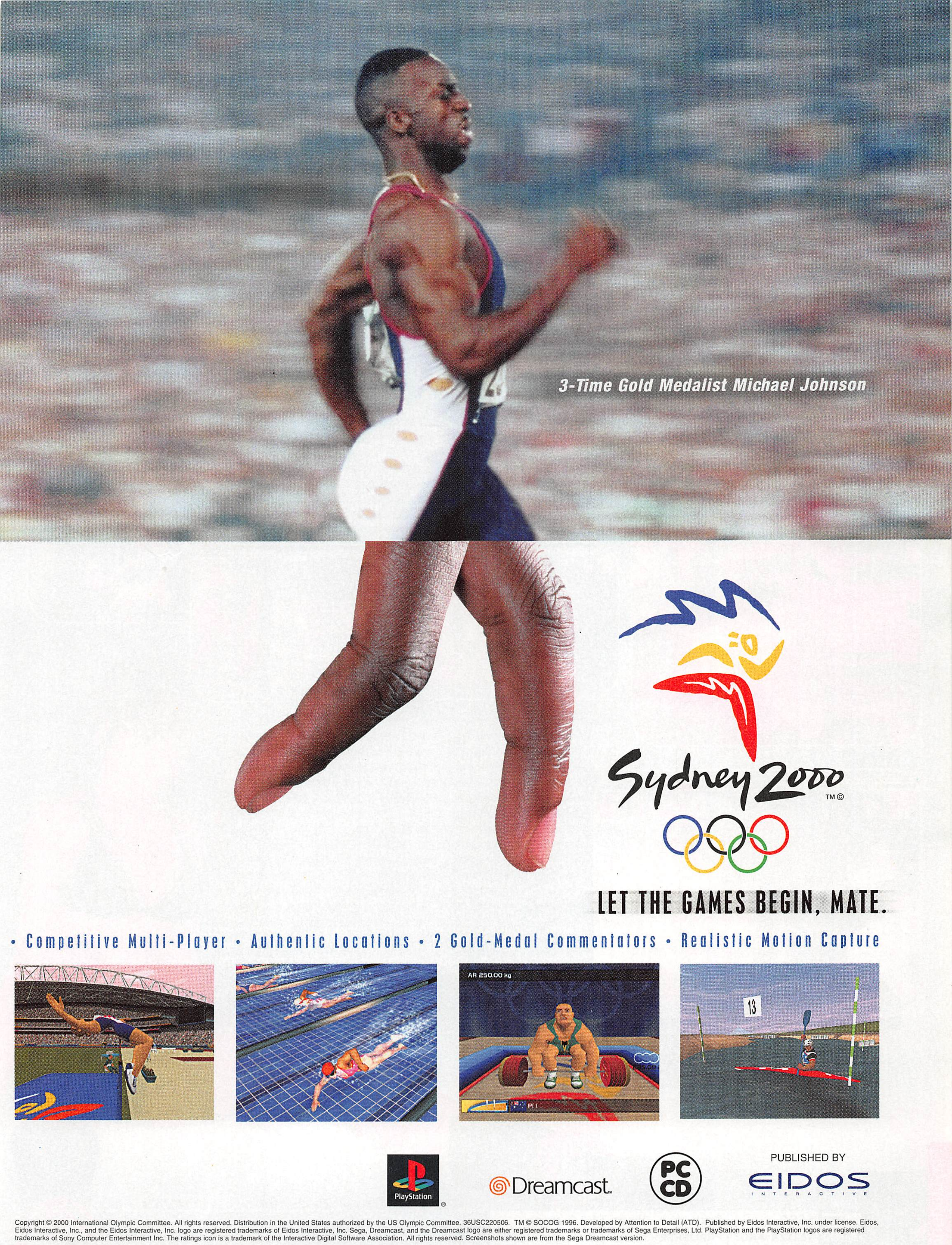
12 Challenging Events • 32 Countries • 4 Gameplay Modes: Head-to-Head, Olympic, Coaching, and Arcade



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DOA2 HARDCORE



Recently, we had the chance to get some hands-on action with the sizzling *Dead or Alive 2* on PlayStation 2. If you recall, months back we picked the U.S. Dreamcast version as being superior to the Japanese PlayStation 2 version, mainly because the graphics were cleaner (more costumes and stages are nice and all, but if given a choice, I'll take the shimmering-free version any day). First, a bit of bad news. The lack of anti-aliasing is still a problem in this new version of the game. We were told that the programmers are working on remedying it, but the rev we saw still suffered from jaggy-itis. Fortunately, not all the levels suffered from this PS2 malady. Some backgrounds are jaggy free, while others have developed more acute cases of this dreaded disease.



If jaggies aren't a problem for you, then you'll be delighted to see the goodies that Tecmo has in this, your very own, *DoA2*-for-PS2 showcase. Won't you tell them about it, Rod? <cue showcase music>

"Well, we'll start you out with a trip to... The Octagon! Popular venue for the world-famous UFC, this Octagon-like stage will play host to the wildest battle royales imaginable. From there, we'll fly you and a friend to... our new, enclosed, electrified fighting arena! Sit back, relax, and sip a piña colada while kicking your friends into that electric fence. Then get ready for the fight of your life in... a new sub-area! The gorgeous castle wall stage from the previous *DoA2* is just the beginning. Slam a friend through a certain chunk of wall, and you'll drop in on a secret area complete with... a giant dragon's head! Watch all your friends gawk in amazement at the power of the PS2 while you pummel them into silent submission.

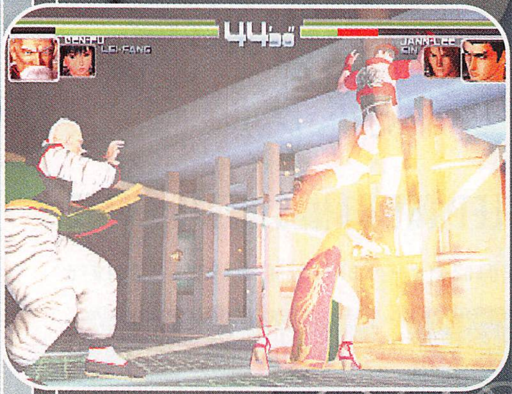








"But you wouldn't want to hand out any punishment without... some new clothes! That's right, we'll treat you and all your friends (even that weird Teletubby guy) to an expansive wardrobe of 4-6 costumes apiece, so you can look stylish, while kicking butt. The latest fashions in cowboy attire, dominatrix gear, or schoolgirl uniforms are all available, ensuring that you've got the right 'look' for each and every situation.

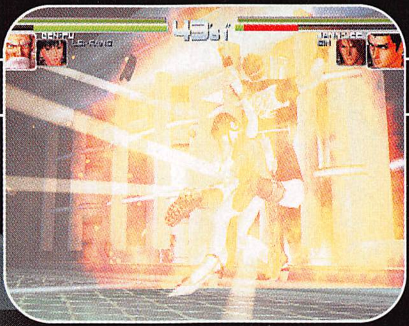


"Next we have... new game modes! Be the envy of Dreamcast *DoA2* fans with fancy game modes like: Story, Team Battle, Tag Battle, Sparring (training), Versus, Survival, Time Attack, Watch, UPS (User Profile System), and Battle Record Modes. The fancy new Team Battle mode lets you handicap a certain player by giving him less fighters to play with, while giving his opponent more characters (there's no tagging involved here, Bob). The brand new UPS mode asks you to enter your name so the game can record all your stats while fighting



EXCLUSIVE	EGGO: Tekken who?	Developer - Tecmo	1-2 Players
		Publisher - Tecmo	Available Oct 26







on the memory card. Lastly, the all-new Battle Record mode lets you save entire matches to memory card for playback later! Once you're done digesting all that, spend a pleasant night or two marveling over the goodies in the Collection and CG gallery. As an added treat for fans of the first game, there's hushed murmurings of an 'extra bouncy' surprise.

"Last up in this spectacular showcase is... new tag team moves! Tired of getting special combos only when the characters are adjacent to each other on the selection screen? Well, now every character has a unique tag team combo with everyone else! Talk about replay value! [Disclaimer: costumes, stages, and hidden characters are all subject to unlocking]."

Thanks, Rod. The price for this entire showcase is estimated at a mere $49.99. Now would you like to bid on it, or pass it along? The choice is yours October 26th. E





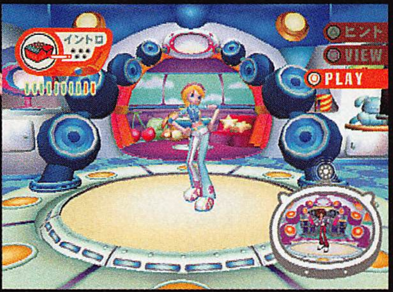


Unison™ IMPORT PREVIEW

Tecmo of Japan has decided to hip-hop into the highly profitable world of dance and rhythm games with its first PS2 offering, *Unison*. I can sum this game up in one word... goofy. OK, two words... fruity? Oh forget it. *Unison* is just plain strange. It's got visual style and play mechanics reminiscent of Enix's *Bust-A-Groove* (known as *Bust-A-Move* in Japan). Like *BaG*, *Unison's* gameplay involves timing your moves to the music, not visual cues like Sony's *Parappa the Rapper* or Konami's *Bemani* games. Unlike any music game yet, though, Unison takes advantage of the analog sticks on the Dual Shock 2.



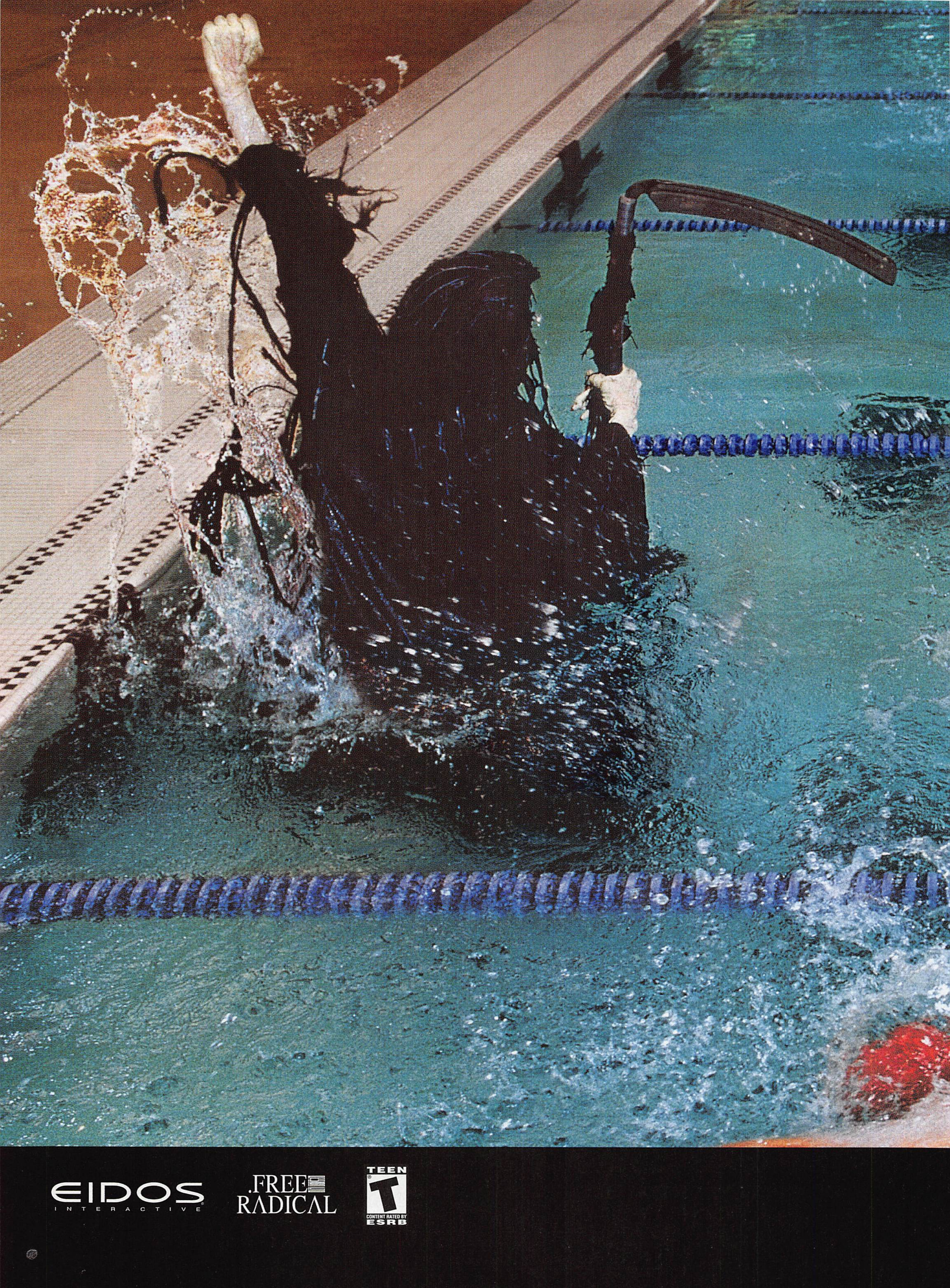


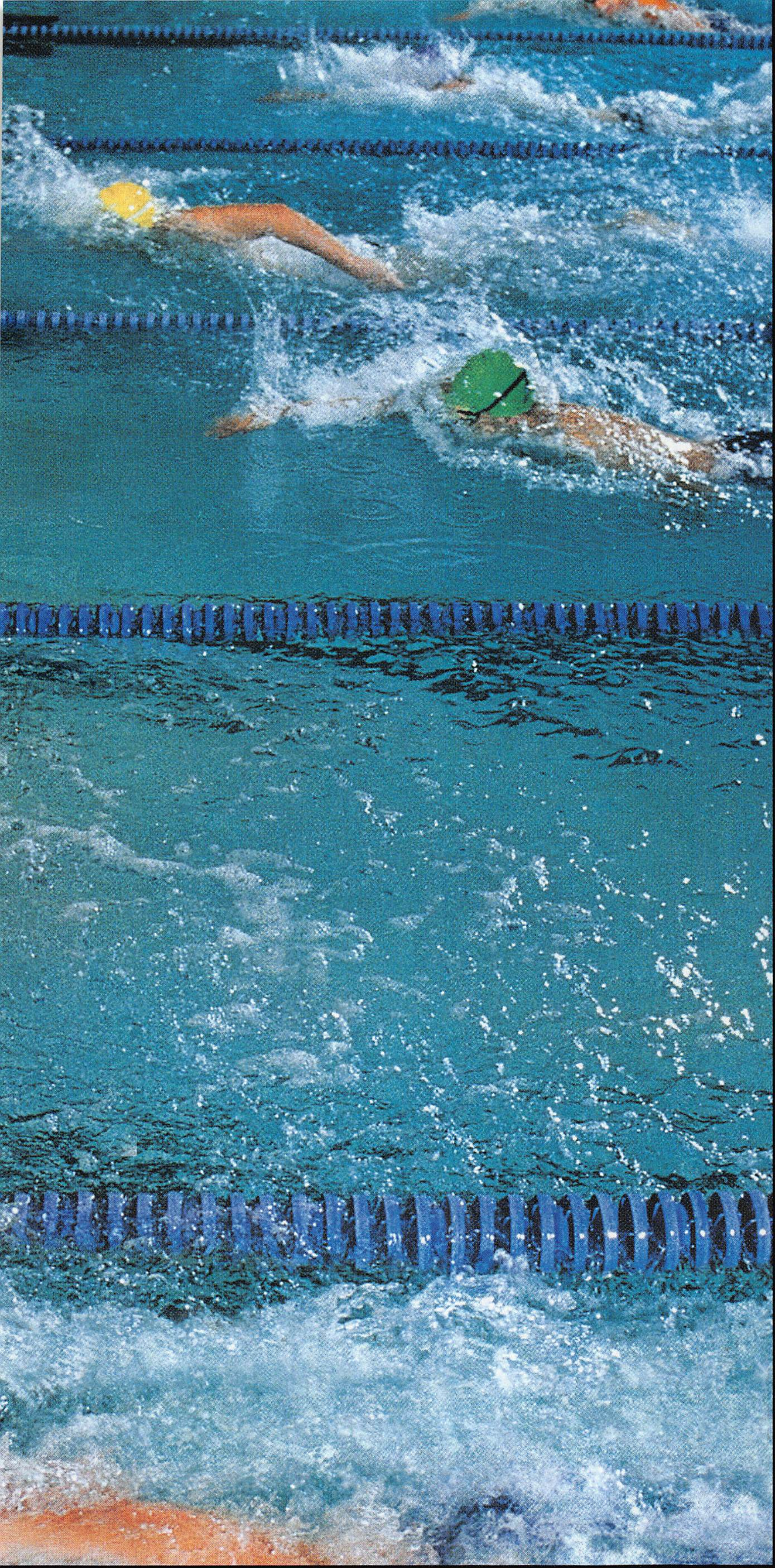


The object is pretty simple, pull off hip dance routines by mimicking the motions of your instructor on the dual analog sticks. The level we saw featured a cover version of the Village People's *Y.M.C.A.* with a heavy Japanese accent. As an example of what you'd do: Raising your hands in the "Y" formation is done by moving the sticks to opposite, upper diagonals. The theme of the game appears to be heavily disco-influenced. Since music games are just now starting to gain momentum in the U.S. (e.g., *Parappa the Rapper*, *Dance Dance Revolution*, and *Samba de Amigo*), Tecmo of America is considering bringing the game State-side. But as we go to print, there are no plans to publish it yet. E

Developer - Tecmo	1 Player	EGGO: Y...
Publisher - Tecmo	Available 4th Qtr	M, She, A...

P PREVIEW

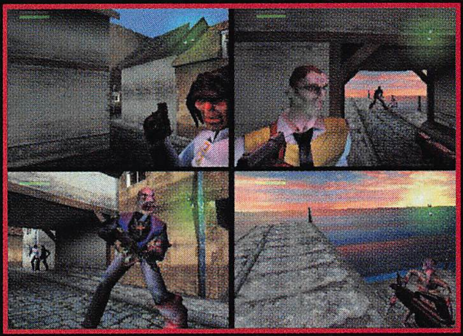

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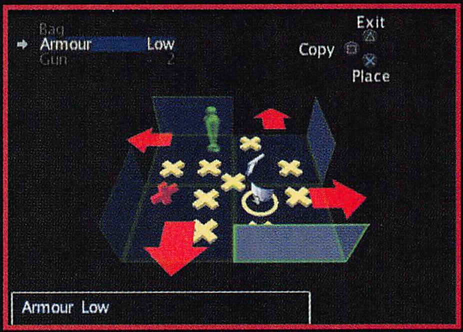
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A simple level editor lets you make your own maps for endless new environments.

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RAYMAN 2
PlayStation

"...Forget the world of power slides, it's time to take a lesson in realism..."

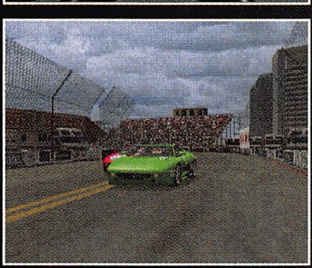
F355 challenge



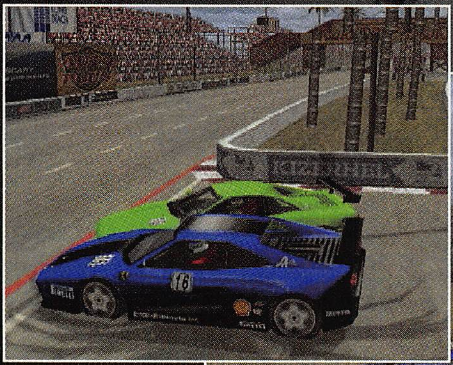


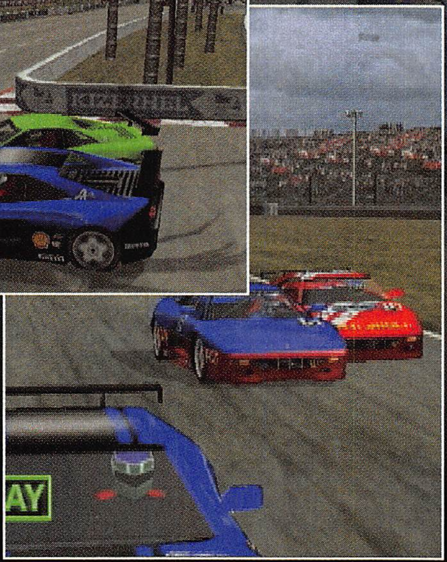
Somewhere out there, I'd like to believe that a team of Sega's best men are hard at work on a Dreamcast conversion of *Daytona 2*. Heck, while I'm at it, let's just imagine that *Super GT's* not that far off either. I mean, let's face it, the DC was built with arcade ports in mind—and Sega has certainly delivered so far! But aside from *Sega Rally 2*, they've really been dwindling in the amount of first party racers released. Now, Yu Suzuki and the talent at AM2 are looking to change that with the addition of *Ferrari F355* Challenge... and let me tell you, it is an absolute achievement in home console racers. It does however come with a serious hook, and this time around it's not the frame rate.

If you happen to check the video game rankings in Japan, you might have noticed that *F355*, despite showcasing unbelievable graphics, barely topped 15,000 units in its first week. Soon, it would drop off the charts completely. But not because Japanese gamers weren't up for some brilliant DC racing, but rather because Yu Suzuki decided to forego the user friendly world of arcadey control and instead, craft Ferrari as a true sim... an extremely difficult sim.



"...So is Ferrari worth it?"





Forget the world of power slides, it's time to take a lesson in realism. You are now the proud owner of a Ferrari F355 (ok, so maybe we'll stray a bit from real life) and you've been invited to take part in the renowned F355 Challenge. Your goal: Cause minimal damage to your $100,000-plus sports car by being an extremely smart driver and staying within the boundaries of your car's design. Basically, that means slowing down to a snail's crawl on hairpin turns (F1 style all the way) and avoiding bouncing off other cars as a means to propel you forward (ala *Daytona USA*). This is not *Outrun*, there is no forgiving gameplay here, and you will be humbled by the learning curve... regardless of your Jedi gaming power.

rari Ferrari Ferrari Ferrari Ferrar Ferrari Ferra



But all is not lost. Yu Suzuki has provided the home rev with a stellar training mode as well as a number of computer-aided assists. This is not a time to be brave. The training is in place for good reason and without enough time following the red training line (which highlights the best racing lines for each stage), you will struggle staying on course to no avail. Like an F1 game, *Ferrari* requires an uncanny amount of memorization for each circuit. Prior to entering into each level, you must know the **exact** location of every chicane and turn and an understanding of what speeds are appropriate for each. And if you're considering entering the championship mode you'll find yourself up against some ruthless competition who ain't afraid to indulge in a bit of rubbin'—just be aware that the slightest nudge will send you carrening out of control. Considering all of the cars in the game are F355s and nearly all have identical speed and handling (though you can tailor certain aspects of your car for improved performance—camber, ride height, etc.) the competition remains fierce mainly because of how they take the turns (which translates to 'Slow down big time'). Don't even think about getting back on that gas till you're long out of the turn... a tough lesson for those used to the proverbial power-slide of justice.















So is *Ferrari* worth it? Will DC owners (as they're helplessly crashing into walls and skidding off the track) be content with a game that requires painstakingly delicate movements. All I can say is, the visuals make it all worth while! You'll literally go from cursing the game for being so difficult to cursing out loud simply because you can't believe how clean everything looks. Sixty frames uncompromised (unless you're in two-player mode, then it's nearly that, or link it for dual 60 fps madness), car models that give those found in the PS2's *Ridge Racer V* a run for their money, tracks that look uncannily like their real life counterparts (with more to be unlocked as you rack up kilometers) and almost no draw-in combine to make Ferrari a must-have for racing fans and graphic hounds alike. Yu Suzuki has again raised the bar... now, who's going to top it?

For once, Fury's not the only one struggling to get out of last place.

Viewpoint Score :92	Developer - AM2/Sega	1-2 Players	FURY: All other consoles
	Publisher - Acclaim	Available Sep	are red-lined with envy...

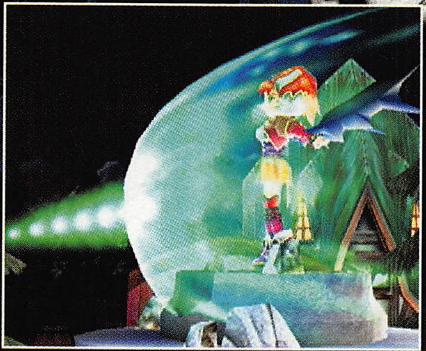
REVIEW


THEY'RE
BIGGER,
FASTER,
SMARTER.
AND RIGHT
BEHIND YOU.
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Animated Blood and Gore
Animated Violence
PlayStation
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DINO CRISIS 2™
VITALITY
Yes, Regina is back in the action-packed sequel to the blockbuster survival-horror hit. Sent in for search and rescue, she is now armed with even more dino-fighting, heavy artillery. Only Regina is prepared for the adrenaline-pumping battles the recon team will soon encounter.
More action! More intensity! More prehistoric predators! One question remains... are you the hunter – or the hunted?
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The wait is over. The skies no longer rain blood and the water is clear once again. At last, the Dreamcast has a good RPG, and all is right with the world. It's taken over a year to get here and a Grade A developer to get the job done, but the DC finally has an RPG which it can brag about at the console roundtable (no more hanging its head in shame with the likes of *Silver* and *Evolution 2* leading the genre). It's somewhat unfortunate that it took so long and a company of the caliber of Game Arts, creators of *Grandia*, *Dragon Force*, *Lunar 1* & *2* (which live again on eBay), to cauterize the Dreamcast's hemorrhaging RPG wounds, but at least this final hurdle has been cleared. We also owe a great deal of thanks to Ubi Soft for having the foresight to pick this game up right away and localize it correctly (with the voice actors from *Metal Gear Solid* nonetheless), so we won't get a repeat of the original *Grandia* massacre (oh, the screams still haunt my sleepless nights...).







Fans of the original will be happy to see a lot of familiar elements return in the sequel; the lighthearted atmosphere, furniture rearranging, and the timing meter in battle all make welcome returns here. The music is still well-done and jovial, keeping the mood upbeat and as unserious as it gets in an RPG these days. While you can't rearrange the furniture (pots, coat racks, chairs, etc.) quite as much as the original, there's still a bit of interior decorating to be had here. Combat remains much the same, with a slide meter determining when individuals (including enemies) can perform actions, and decisions regarding attack, defense, magic or item use all have to be planned around events in the near future. When in doubt, I always consult the omnipotent Magic 8-ball regarding matters of when to attack or guard. Should I combo strike now? "All signs point to yes." "Ugh.... Agh... Gwah!!! <gurgle>" On second though, when in doubt, always select guard and wait to attack next turn. Needless to say, it's not just as simple as taping down the attack button till the end of the fight. You're going to have to think in this game.

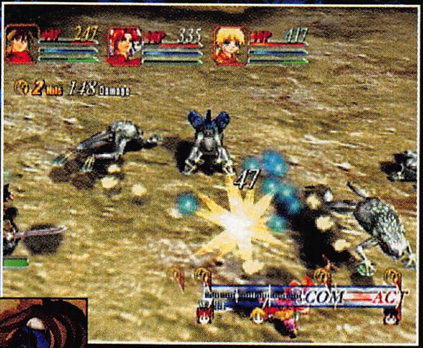


GRANDIA II

グランディア







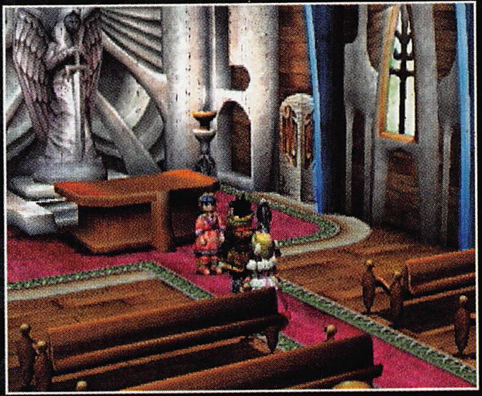


P PREVIEW	EGGO: LET THERE BE RPGS...	DEVELOPER - GAME ARTS	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - UBI SOFT	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR









Grandia II's graphics are in another league compared to the competition; this is simply the best looking RPG ever. Unlike *Final Fantasy IX*, *Legend of Dragoon*, or *Valkyrie Profile* (which are all gorgeous games), *Grandia II* doesn't have flat, pre-rendered backgrounds. Instead, every single building, character, and piece of furniture is well-crafted from the finest polygons a Dreamcast can buy. This is the best engine, characters, and backgrounds ever to grace an RPG (i.e., until *Phantasy Star Online* comes out). Considering we're basing this preview off the Japanese final, I don't expect the graphics to change much in the U.S. release, which is a good thing, considering even the camera is easy-to-maneuver and seldom poses a problem.

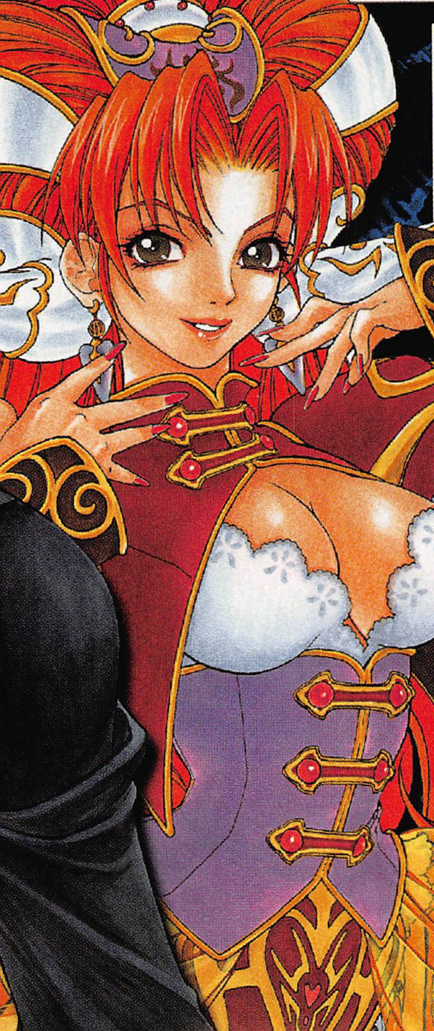




The story begins with you controlling Rudo, a mercenary for hire who isn't popular because of his reputation as a Geo Hound. Accompanied by his faithful, yet wise-cracking eagle buddy Sky, Rudo's first mission is to escort the fragile young town girl, Elena, to a tower just down the road for a mysterious ceremony. Once you make it there, an evil demon interrupts the festivities and possesses Elena's body. From there, it's up to you to discover what this 'darkness' is that everyone's talking about and discern why Elena was floating in mid-air, sheathed in sparks of energy when you walked in. Is she still the same naïve towngirl with the sweet voice, or is she Linda Blair minus the pea soup?

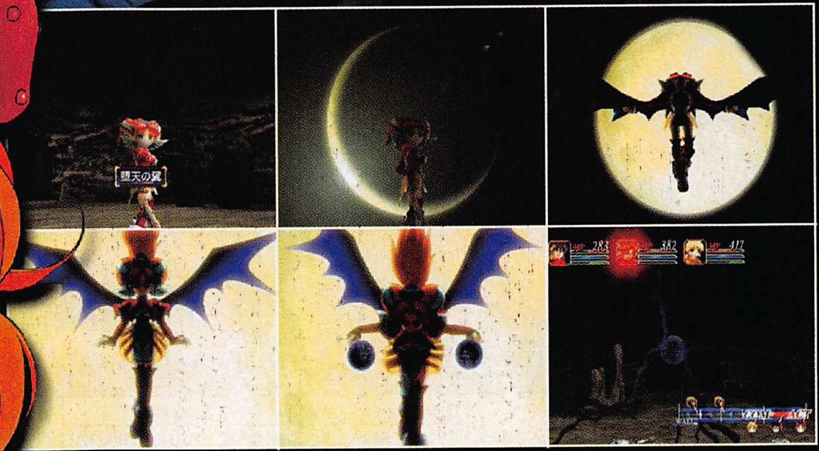


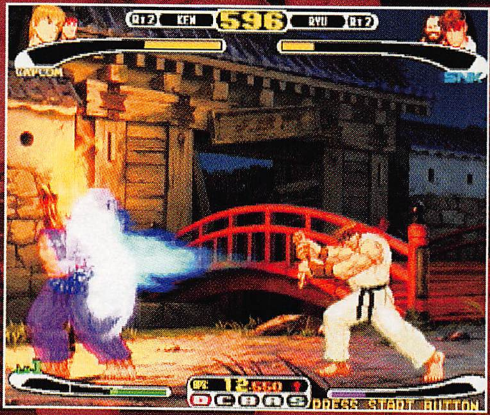
The hardest thing about writing this preview is knowing I must wait another couple months before playing the final U.S. version. But after experiencing this game in Japanese, I no longer worry about the Dreamcast becoming like the N64, a system which repulses RPG's like Kodomo does women. The wait will be well worth it, and best of all, this isn't the only RPG to look forward to, Sega fans. There's a good chance (although unfortunate) that *Grandia II* will be overshadowed by Sega's *Phantasy Star Online*, which is sure to have some massive hype behind it. Not that I feel RPG's must have an online component, but *PSO* is looking too good to miss as well. Factor in the already impressive *Skies of Arcadia*, and Dreamcast owners could have the best RPG lineup of the holidays, toppling even the almighty PlayStation. **E**



FMV Splicing

From time to time, *Grandia II* blends FMV with polygons in the same scene (a technique first shown off in *Space Channel 5*). In this sequence, Millenia gets pissed off, which brings out her darker, more evil magic-wielding powers. She rises up in the air and summons balls of purple energy, which she hurls at the soon-to-be-toasted enemies. Can you tell which parts are FMV and which are in-game polys? The transition is really well done.







CAPCOM® VS. SNK® MILLENNIUM FIGHT 2000

First, A Disclaimer

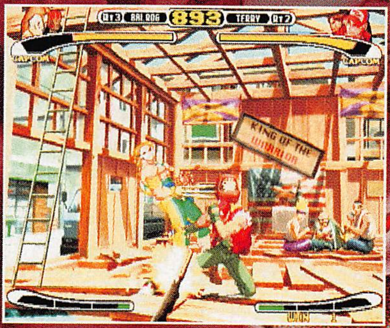
Prior to getting into the nuts and bolts of this review let me just preface it all with the following:

You'll no doubt hear, as previews and reviews of *CVS* start rolling in, that the game is "boring" or "too slow paced" or some such nonsensical complaint. Well, here's the rub: *CVS* is **not** like the other *Vs.* games. You'll find no tagging and no over-the-top, eye-shattering supers that recent chapters in the series have prided themselves on. You also won't find any air blocks, alpha counters, guard breaks or parries to aid in defense. And to top it all off, you won't even find heavy-duty 3D backdrops *à la Marvel Vs. Capcom 2* nor the caliber of animation inherent in the *Street Fighter 3* series of titles. Still with me? Haven't closed the magazine in disgust? Aren't cursing Capcom and burning your Street Fighters or SNK union card? Still curious as to why this game garnered the score it did? Good... because you're the guys this game is squarely aimed at.

Back to Basics

Don't get me wrong: after all, I love the versus series as much as the next hopped-up, arcade-going teen. However, sometimes you just need a more sedate, seizure-free episode to clear the cobwebs and make sure that you can still be entertained by genuine gameplay and not ultra-flashy, play-deficient set pieces—after all, when was the last time you played a fair game of two-player *Marvel Vs. Capcom 2*? That's right, never.

Which is what makes *CVS* so appealing: Not only does it feature a conflict that otaku across the world have been gasping for since the early days of *Street Fighter* and *Fatal Fury*, it also features solid, *mano a mano* fisticuffs. Thanks to the removal of several of the features that have gradually been bolted onto *Street Fighter* since the inception of *SF Alpha* (presumable to make the field more level for the inclusion of SNK characters), the game is now utterly and beautifully simplistic. No longer will you have to master arcane 'isms' and obscene, screen-filling super-duper 200-hit tag combos—now you can concentrate more on what matters: the game.



Make Up!

If there's one thing that everybody should be excited over, it's the graphics. For years now, I've been dying to see the SNK characters get a true overhaul—and Capcom has come through in spades. While the hardcore *KoF* players will crucify me for this, Terry, Mai, Iori and company have **never** looked better. Completely re-







R REVIEW	ECM: CVS: Champ Vs. Scrubs	Developer - Capcom	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 97
		Publisher - Capcom	Available 4th Qtr	



drawn with Capcom-style art, and **new** animation (yeah, not the recycled junk that SNK has been using for 6 years now). I let out a whoop of glee the first time I took Terry Bogard out for a spin and saw the resplendent colors, animation and effects that SNK should have implemented years ago, but couldn't (hey, the Neo's only got so much power). Garou looked stunning, but the characters simply look better in *CVS*.

While the actual re-drawn characters are beautiful (at least from the SNK side) the Capcom characters are a mish-mash of designs from *SF3* and the *SF Alpha* series. For instance, Ken and Ryu are straight from *SF3* while Zangief has been torn from *Alpha* and so on. The animation quality of individual characters varies widely, but for the most part, it's decent. While it's not on par with *SF3*, what's there is good.

Special note goes to the addition of several 3D effects, via the Dreamcast hardware: fireballs, dragon punches, power waves, etc. are all spruced up with some stunning new effects that really enhance the overall presentation. You've never seen a dragon punch as resplendent and (this one's for you, Kevin) scintillating as these in any fighting game... period.



Choose Your Weapons

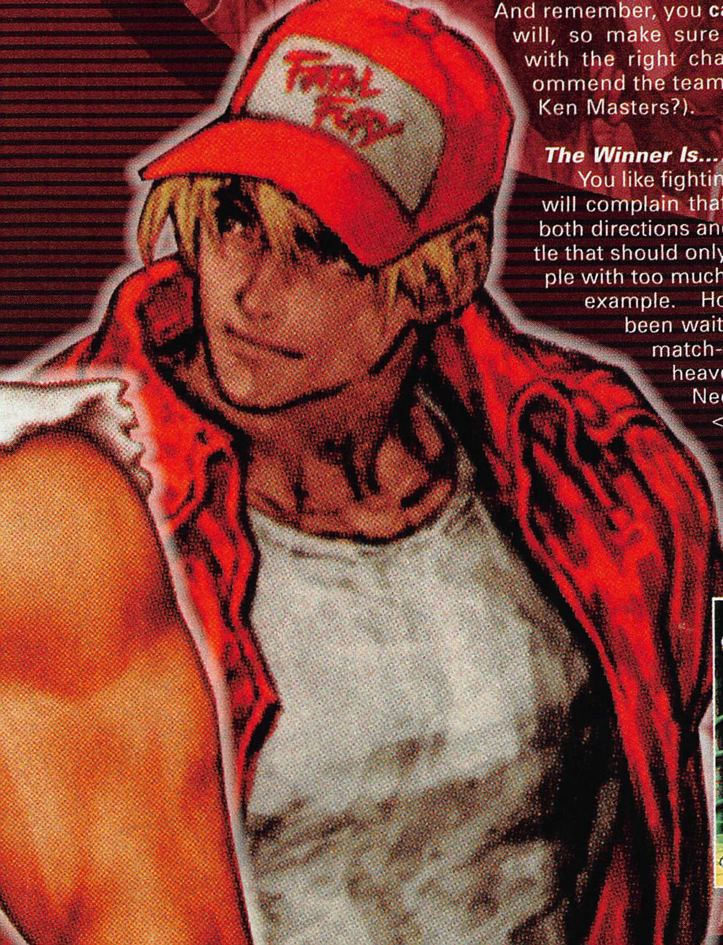
The big mystery going into *CVS* for the first time was how did Capcom intend to keep the two schools of fighting—SNK and Capcom—distinct enough to please both camps. And the answer is they came up with two different power-up techniques: SNK or Capcom, oddly enough.

First off, if you choose SNK you'll power up your super bar *KoF*-style: hold down two buttons and fill your super bar up *Dragonball* style. If you pick Capcom, you get old school 'build as you go' charging up. Either way, the fighting styles themselves have been limited to 4 buttons as opposed to 6—you can either look at this as Capcom throwing the SNK players a bone or simply that all future Capcom fighting games will likely implement only 4 buttons thanks to the set-up of NAOMI cabinets. I simply see it as tossing out the nearly useless (all the hardcore *SF* players are going crazy now) medium attack buttons—and I couldn't be happier. After all, anybody that used to play SNES *SF* always assigned the medium attacks to the shoulder buttons, right? That was for a very good reason...



Engage!

The final twist brought to the 'match of the millennium' is a point-based character choosing system. You start out with 4 points and then build a team out of 1, 2, or 3-point characters. For example, the bosses (Geese, Bison, etc.) are each worth 3 of your 4 point total. You then get to pick a single 1 point character: Blanka, Benimaru, etc. to round out the team. However, you can pick four 1 point characters, two 2 point characters, and so on into any combination of 4. Confused? Probably not. And remember, you **can't** tag in and out at will, so make sure you start the fight with the right character (might I recommend the team supreme of Terry Bogard and Ken Masters?).





The Winner Is...?

You like fighting games, you'll like *CVS*. Some will complain that it's too much of a sacrifice in both directions and that *Capcom Vs. SNK* is a battle that should only be fought in the minds of people with too much time on their hands... Fury, for example. However, those of us that have been waiting for nearly a decade for this match-up will be in fighting game heaven. Anybody that's played the Neo pocket version will love it <sigh>, and as for the rest of you it's certainly worth more than a passing glance. Now it's time for me to go work a little magic with the team supreme and show Fury the true meaning of *CVS*... Champ vs. Scrub.

ECM is a huge fan of adding gasoline to fires; witness his replies to newsgroup postings—or read the above article.













GORKAMORKA



Warhammer 40,000; to some it is just a peculiar, if not somewhat cool title. To others, it is a chalice of pen and paper gaming spilling over with geekdom goodness. One of the most popular sausage activities of the last 20 years, *Warhammer 40,000* is an offshoot of the roleplaying game *Warhammer*. The idea was to take denizens of the standard fantasy realm and put them in the "what if" scenario of the future. The result? A way to equip dim-witted orcs with ray guns and put them in the cockpits of space cruisers.

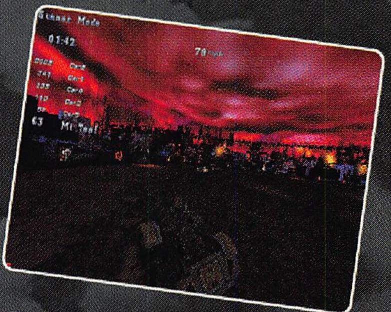
Gorkamorka takes place in this fantastical world and centers on the struggles of a group of spacefaring orcs who have crash landed on a barren planet while en route to their Eden (I told you they were dim-witted). After many years stranded, the brains manage to construct a space-worthy craft to lift them off this rock and get them to their destination. Only problem is that there is limited seating...

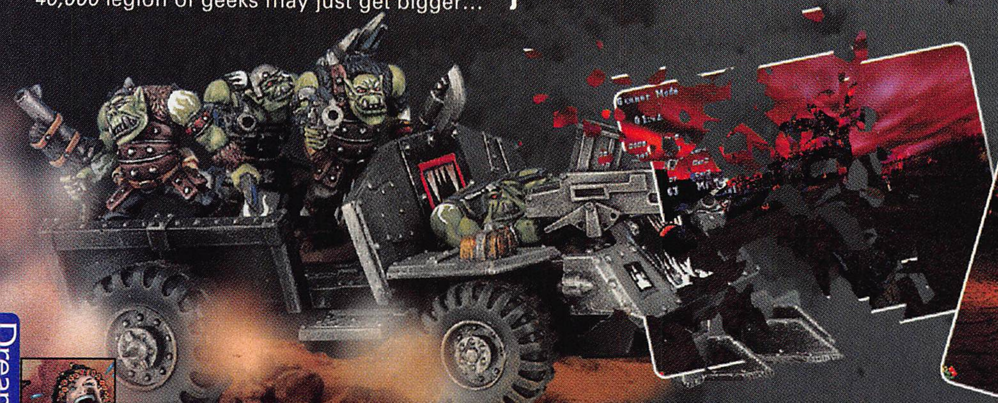
So how do you decide who gets to go to paradise and who has to play out the rest of their existence on a dead world? Easy: Make them battle for their reservation. The orcs decide to run races where anything goes. You win enough of these races and you earn your way to the promised land. Of course, these contests are vicious and result in many a orc buying the farm. It's not bad enough that the other drivers are trying to kill you... You have fans getting in on the action. We're talkin' some serious Thunderdome action.

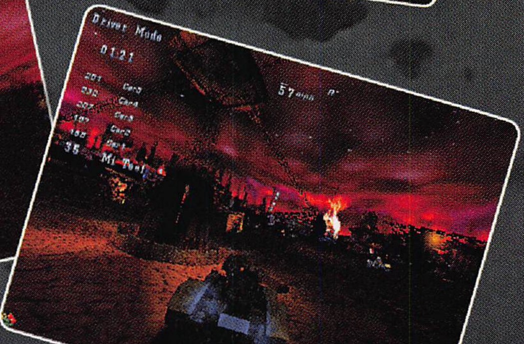
This game is kickin' some serious ass right now. The graphics are good, the racing engine is cool, and there is enough story to make the game deep. Additions like your own fan base that will help you try to stop other drivers add to the enjoyment and with it supporting SegaNet, you can get up to 16 people into the action (8 teams with one gunner and one driver on each car). The mechanics of switching between driver and gunner are easy enough where it will be just as fun to race without all of your friends.

To keep the variety high, you will be able to fuly customize your scrap metal racing machine. Earn orc teeth (the monetary unit used by orcs) from your races and by the best upgrades possible.

Gorkamorka may just make combat racing fresh and interesting again. The *Warhammer 40,000* legion of geeks may just get bigger... J









P PREVIEW	THE JUDGE: "MY TUMMY FEELS FUNNY!"	DEVELOPER - MATAHARI	1-16 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - RIPCORD	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR.





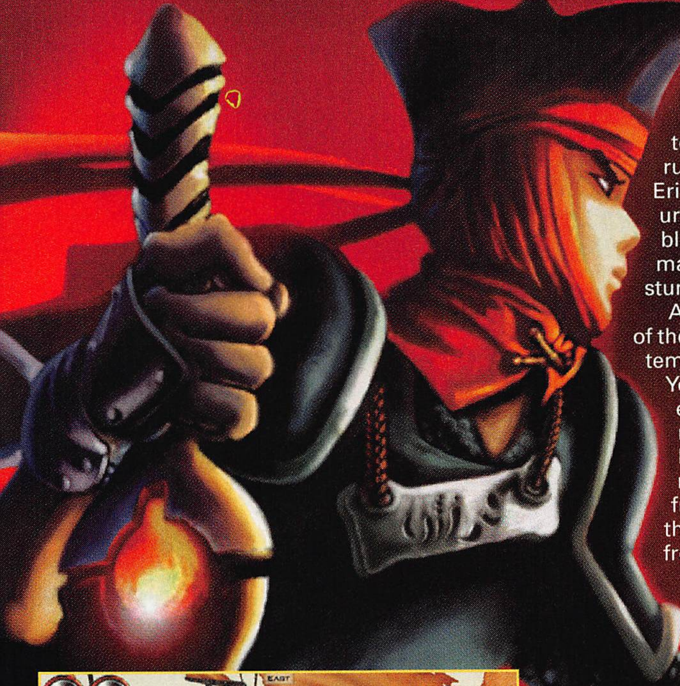
You might be asking yourself, why is Fury writing up *Legend of the BladeMasters*... an RPG. This, of course, is generally Eggo's territory, but thanks to an impending deadline, we've found ourselves up to our necks in work (ok, so it's just games but it's still painfully time consuming). So here I am with the assist to our lone RPG fanatic (who I think just wants more time with *Final Fantasy IX*) and let me tell you, I sort of feel like a fish out of water here. But truth is, I do like RPGs (just not to the degree of the rest of the staff) and from time to time, I've even been known to indulge in a bit of *Panzer Saga* and some old school *Phantasy Star*. With the launch of SegaNet though, I've actually been considering giving the genre a second go. Ya see, every night as I prepare to leave GameFan, Eggo's just starting his day... err, night. He's a bona fide *Diablo*-aholic and I've always wondered what drives him to stay at the office until the wee hours of the morning. I suppose it's the online play he's after, as Eggo and a company of waffles wage battle over the phone lines (or, in our case, a T1). Soon, I'll have the chance to see for myself with the release of the first "true" networkable DC RPGs like Sonic Team's brilliant looking *Phantasy Star Online* and Ripcord Games' *Legend of the BladeMasters*.





Uhh, point and click?! Hmm, this certainly is new territory for me (I think the last P&C game I played was *Loom* and *Oregon Trail*... damn cholera ruins my fun every time). Well at least I can still use the DC controller. Remember, keyboard and mouse is no substitute for a good ol' game pad... no matter what the PC stalwarts say!

Legend of The Blade Masters

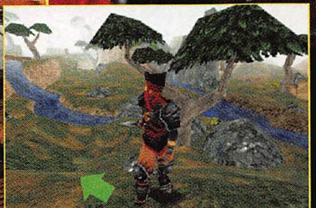


All right, so the control setup might be a bit unfamiliar for a home console but the story is definitely a common tale (if you're on a serious dose of valium and lithium, that is). Basically, in an ancient time of dragons and other mythical beasts, five merciless guardians are scouring the land for seven magical swords. Unfortunately for all local townspeople, the Guardians' endless pursuit has left the countryside in ruin and engulfed in war. And that's where you come in, playing the role of Erik, a simple boy with a dream (ok, I added the dream part for good measure). Lost in the forest one day, Erik comes across one of the seven sacred blades (so you're telling me the all powerful Guardians with so much untold magic at their disposal can't locate the blades but a mere boy happens to stumble upon one? Questionable indeed...) and so his journey begins.

Along the way, Erik will join up with other heroes also looking to make sense of the recent turmoil; this is where the online play comes in. With the battle system taking place in real time, *LotBM* will seemingly play out similar to *PSO*. Your party will traverse the land together and assist each other in battle, with each member possessing his or her own unique abilities, strengths weaknesses and so on. August Winslow for instance, who looks frighteningly like the old man from *Ninja Scroll*, has the ability to communicate with animals and is resistant to the extreme cold... just make sure to keep him away from heat (it might singe his beard). And speaking of *Ninja Scroll*, expect the art style to incorporate a **heavy** anime look... definitely a nice distraction from the SD marshmallow look pioneered by Square.

Ripcord Games might not be a major name in the industry, but that might just change if they land the first RPG for SegaNet. Sure, the whole point-and-click control system might not be for everyone, but when you're starving for networkable DC games, beggars can't be choosers. So will Fury be joining Eggo in his late night adventures? Guess you'll have to go online and find out. **F**









Developer - Ronin	1-4 Players	Fury: An RPG for Fury?
Publisher - Ripcord	Available 4th Qtr	

P PREVIEW





BUZZ LIGHTYEAR OF STAR COMMAND

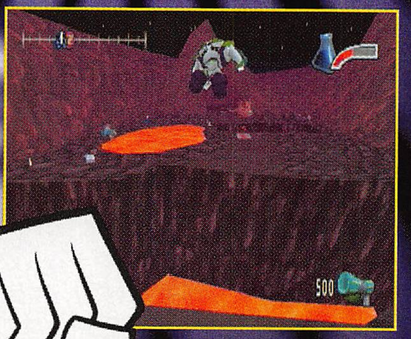
For me, the first few minutes of *Toy Story 2* was up there with the best of them, trailing behind *Blade* and *The Replacement Killers* for that introductory action fix. When Buzz Lightyear shoots and jumps his way through a mysterious planet, only to subsequently discover that it is a video game, the groundwork for an actual game was quickly put into place. Fast forward one year and Buzz does have his own game (please, forget the abysmal *Toy Story 2* game for a second...), based on the straight-to-video cartoon *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command*.

Primarily, the game is a 2.5D action platformer, with a heavy emphasis on accurately reproducing the look of the cartoon. As Buzz, you must battle against the scourge of the universe (namely, Zurg), who has just invaded the Planet of the Little Green Men. Moving from planet to planet, Buzz must race and then battle several new enemies, before a final confrontation with Zurg can take place.

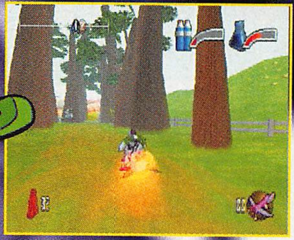
As each level starts off, a boss throws down the gauntlet to Buzz and challenges him to a race. Get to the end of the level before, or shortly after the boss, or the quest ends prematurely. Of course, nothing is ever that easy, and you must race past enemy robots, environmental hazards and other general nastiness that will sap Buzz's life.

Along the way, Buzz can pick up various power ups and tools to aid him. The key seems to be triangular coins, worth either 1 or 5 points, which allow you to access almost everything that you come across. Weapons, such as missile launchers, chasing plasma bolts and a megaphone that drains enemy shields are found contained within clear spheres that require a certain amount of coins to open. You'll also find several other coin powered items that will speed you along in your races, such as jump pads, teleportation hubs, wings yielding flight and, my personal favorite, air cars.

Right now, the DC version is looking great. With graphics that run near the coveted 60 FPS mark, and carry that distinctive Dreamcast quality look, most of the remaining work seems to lie in the tweaking area of the game. The camera follows Buzz too tightly, especially in the end level combat phases, and, even with the camera centering button, obscures the view a little too often. Still, Disney's headed in the right direction and *Buzz Lightyear* might just live up to the promised hype this November. K



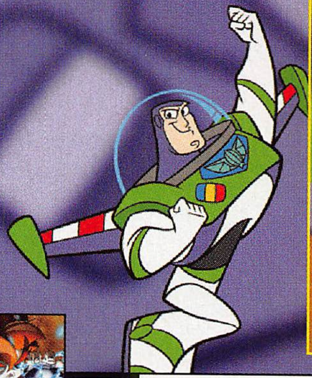














PREVIEW	Developer - Traveller's Tales	1 Player
KODOMO: To the Dreamcast—and beyond!	Publisher - Activision	Available Nov

THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY BEGINS WITH ONE NAME



THE RESURRECTION OF TERROR. THE REBIRTH OF WAR. THE RETURN OF TUROK.

For generations, the title of Turok has been given to only the bravest, strongest and most courageous of warriors. It is an honor like no other bestowed on mortal beings. But with it follows a life of war, hardship and loss. Now, a new generation of warriors, Joseph and Danielle Fireseed, fight to continue the legacy of Turok. And they must face a savage cosmic entity of unspeakable evil, called Oblivion. They do this for honor. They do this for humanity. Most of all, they do this because they are heroes.

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New "Save Anywhere" function and 25 hidden game features!



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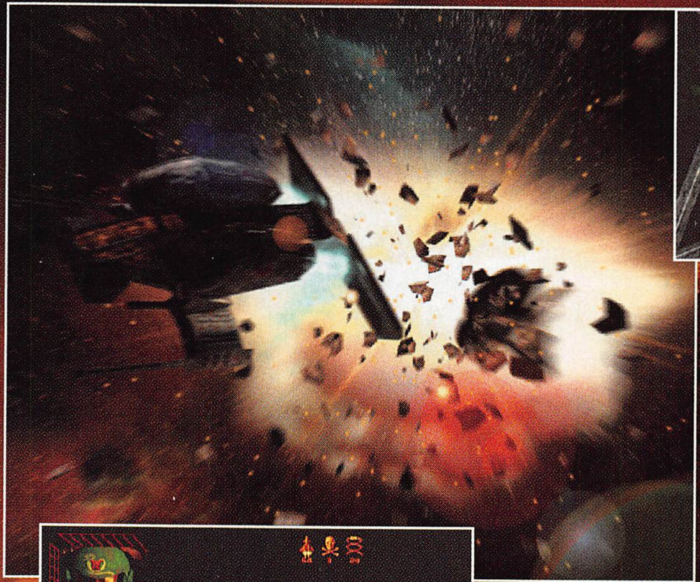


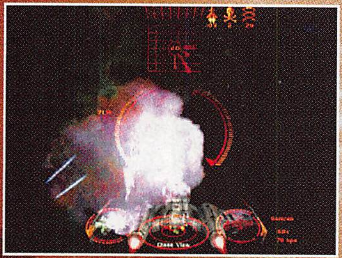
Wield 24 devastating weapons through 8 intense multi-player modes!

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Blood and Gore, Animated Violence

NINTENDO 64 — GAME BOY COLOR

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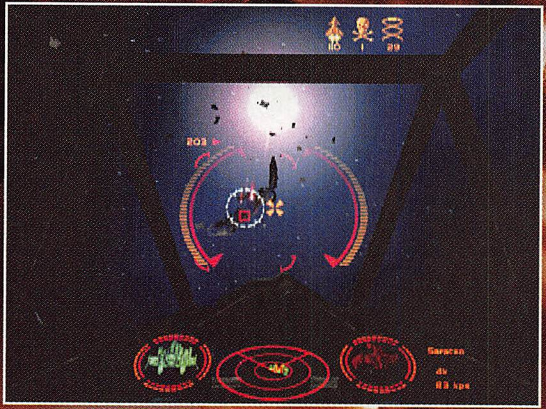
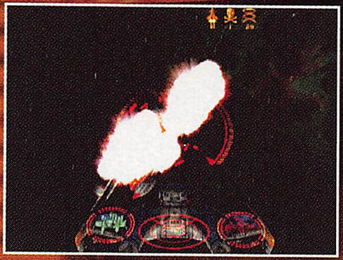




StarLancer

When I was but a wee Eggo, before undertaking my grueling ninja training, I was just like all the other seven-year-olds, full of imagination and wanting to be Mark Hamill. I'm not sure what it was about Luke, but it just wasn't as cool to pretend being Indy (apologies to Harrison Ford), Optimus Prime, or Duke from *G.I. Joe* (although I am kinda partial to Storm Shadow myself). I suspect it's 'cause none of them got a chance to kiss a nubile Carrie Fisher. Anyway, the closest I ever got to being Luke Skywalker as a kid was playing Chris Roberts' *Wing Commander* on the PC. This game put you in the cockpit of a souped-up starfighter and gave you the chance to be the best star pilot in the galaxy. Perform some particularly heroic deeds and you were even presented a medal, complete with throne room ceremony, albeit minus Carrie Fisher and John Williams' beautiful score. Ever since then, console starfighter games haven't been able to compare to the lofty *Wing Commander*. *Colony Wars* is a great series, but it wasn't quite like *WC*. Crave's *Starlancer*, however, is *Wing Commander* on console.



It's shouldn't surprise you that *Starlancer* is so close to *Wing Commander* because one of the developers on the project is Erin Roberts, brother to Chris Roberts (of *WC* fame). *Starlancer* is originally a hit PC title, but don't worry, Dreamcast owners, you're not being shafted by the port. Of primary importance, the DC rev features multi-player dogfights over the Internet involving up to eight people! Up to eight starpilots can engage in a Dreamcast deathmatch, while you and three buds and go at it co-op in missions as well.

As for the gameplay, *WC* fans will feel right at home in the cockpit. Controls are just what you'd expect in a game like this: thrust, reverse, fire guns, missile lock-on, turbo boost, etc. Wingmen are present and accounted for; they'll report to you, fight alongside you, and send transmissions during combat. There's a lot of story development also, as the outcome of a single mission can affect the bigger picture for missions to come. So a single failure won't spell doom for an entire campaign, as long as you've got some sharp piloting maneuvers still within you.

While it's not as high profile as other SegaNet titles, *Starlancer* is at the top of my list of SegaNet games I can't wait to play online (right next to *NFL2K1*). November can't come soon enough. E

P PREVIEW	EGGO: USE THE FORCE, EGGO.	DEVELOPER - WARTHOG PUBLISHER - CRAVE	1-8 PLAYERS AVAILABLE 4TH QTR



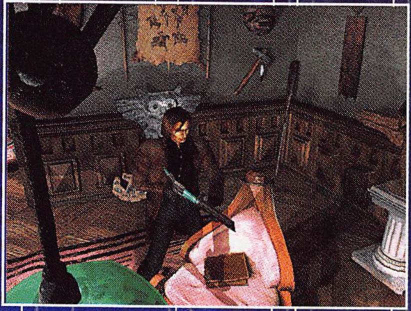
* This is a dramatization. Do not attempt to plug box into game console. Silly doll box not available in stores.

COMING SOON

Dreamcast

The franchise that launched Survival Horror before it was even called Survival Horror. *Alone in the Dark IV* is all about the things that go bump in the night. You and a friend must uncover the secrets in an old, seemingly abandoned, mansion on a deserted island. It's all about splashing your flashlight across a darkened room, only to have it fall upon some freaky ass monster!







Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare

Developer
Darkworks

Publisher
Infogrames

Dreamcast

The popular Sinbad wannabe is back and this time he's... well... doing more of the same. 3D platforming is the name of the game as you try and save a damsel in distress from the clutches of a very bad man. The frame rate is a bit low and the animation a bit choppy, but the game is still early. Question is, does anyone still care about this franchise? Mattel hopes so.







Prince of Persia

Developer
Avalanche

Publisher
Mattel Interactive

Dreamcast

Unreal Tournament on the PS2 is looking quite impressive... a giant leap from where it was at E3. The Dreamcast version, however is still stumbling and, despite its utilizing SegaNet, is a far cry from its PS2 counterpart. In the end, it is going to be very hard for this game to be able to compete with the incredibly good *Quake 3* which may be the best FPS on a console, ever.







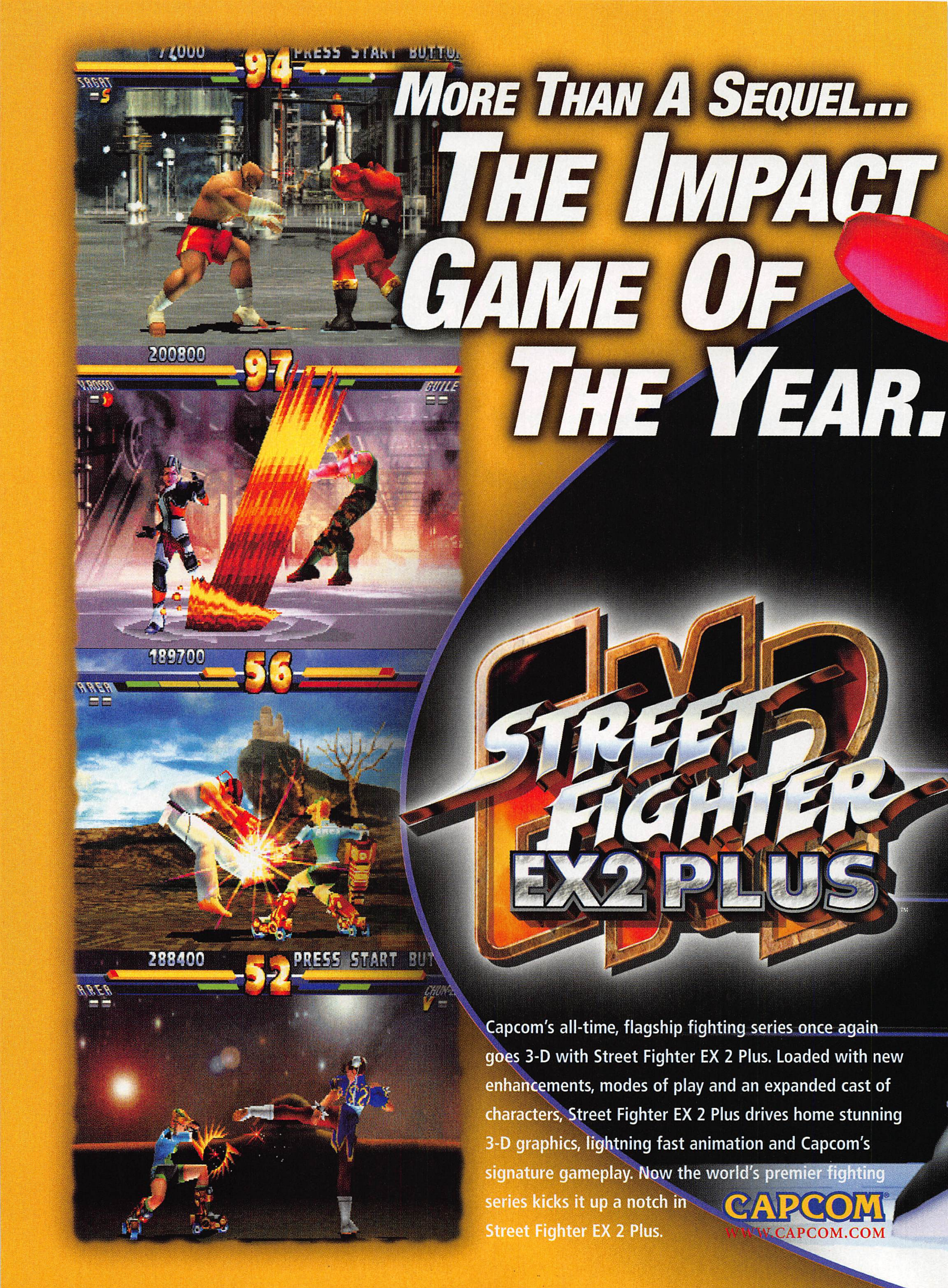
Unreal Tournament

Developer
Secret Level

Publisher
Infogrames



YOU DEFEND YOUR FAMILY.
YOU DEFEND YOUR HOMELAND.
YOU DEFEND ALL THAT IS GOOD.
BUT FIRST, YOU MUST DEFEND YOURSELF.
DRAGON VALOR™
TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
PlayStation
namco
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You are the very first dragon slayer, a fearless hero who must combat the most horrific of enemies. You will vanquish evil, marry the heroine, and continue your heroic legacy with each new generation. You will fight as 9 brave characters in 3 action-packed storylines, and battle to prove your worth, your might, your Dragon Valor.
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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood
PlayStation

Dynasty Warriors 2



Reviews

I can remember it like it was yesterday... Eggo excitedly waving the office copy of Koei's ancient Chinese military sim, *Kessen*, in hand. "Let's boot this baby up," he happily exclaimed! The office was soon in a buzz, as both believers and disbelievers of the PS2's allured prowess gathered around Fury's 20 inch Sony Trinitron (a common place for GF staffers to assemble and partake in the newest games and heated arguments: "No way, the parallax in *Chakan* crushed anything on the SNES..." "You heretic!"). "Hey where's Fury?" noted ECM. <Hiding behind a stack of import mags, I sat> "Uh Fury, what's wrong?" "Man, I'm so depressed. I really wanted to play *Kessen* but it's a thinking man's game... dude. Too much strategy and way too much text involved! I guess I'll just go back to watching the *Gradius* intro." Wait a sec, I know of a solution... a way for you to enjoy the battles of *Kessen* but without all the complicated menu systems—its called *Shin Sangokumuso,* aka *Dynasty Warriors 2* and it might just be up your alley!





Indeed, Koei set out to create the ultimate hack-'n-slash beat-'em-up (scale wise) and opted to use Kessen's feudal backdrop as a setting. The result is a game with an extraordinary body count, brilliant jaw dropping battles and very little replay value... But will straight hack-'n-slash (albeit great looking hack-'n-slash) gameplay be enough for those who dropped $299.99 on a PS2?



Dynasty Warriors 2 might not be a system seller, but it is worth the price of admission. Never before has a console game appeared (other than in an RTS) with so many characters alive and completely engaged in action on screen. Literally, dozens upon dozens of rampaging soldiers light up *DW2*'s detail-starved battlefield. Detail starved? That's right, legions of blood thirsty militia don't exactly generate themselves... Koei's certainly utilizing the PS2's poly crunching power here, but at what price? The battles are truly a sight to behold as war rages on in nearly every direction. But beyond that, the game suffers from insidious fogging and an almost completely detail stripped battlefield. Obviously every spare poly was scooped up to battle the laws of slowdown (though it does tend to rear its ugly head—

Previews







pretty damn impressive though) as the games engine ruthlessly taxes the PS2... "More enemies damn you! We need more!" "But Kiptin, she's giving it all she can—" "Oh well, then trim the hedges a bit more and lets triple that body count!"

Ok, so, with your tall order of spilled guts and non-stop bloodletting, the battle-side detail suffers, but what's left is still quite appetizing in the least. *Dynasty Warriors 2* plays out with you selecting one of ten playable characters. Right off the bat, that's a pretty impressive selection. But perhaps most impressive, is the detail Koei designers have injected in the models. Armor is not just a plain texture, and your chain mail literally glistens as you engage in battle (hmm, of course that could just be the anti-aliasing). Each fighter also has his or her own unique weapon of choice—battle-axe, mace, spear, broad sword, etc. and a particular set of stats including life, attack and defense. As you battle your way through the thick, various power ups become available and help to increase your attributes. An hour into the fight, and 900 or so slain baddies later, you will be one lean, mean, souped up, killing-ancient-Chinese-warriors machine. But be aware though, the average battle will easily last upwards of 50 minutes and you will get frustrated (if you choose to plow through the levels without using save points)... You will wonder when the next kill will be the last and when the time finally does arrive, you will certainly appreciate victory like never before!





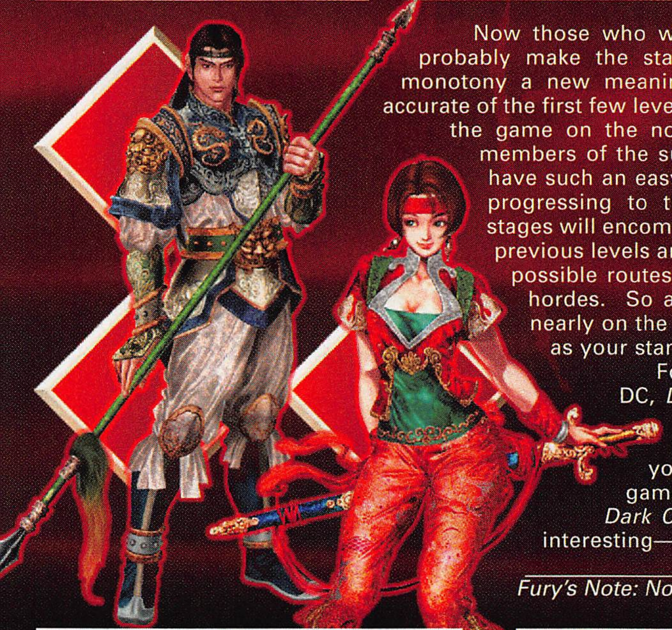












Now those who will inevitably dog on *DW2*, will probably make the statement that the game gives monotony a new meaning... this is truthfully only accurate of the first few levels. If you're playing through the game on the normal setting (or on hard for members of the suicide squad), you won't always have such an easy time racking up kills and steadily progressing to the head general's location. Later stages will encompass forces that are much stronger than previous levels and actually force you to map out the best possible routes not completely overwhelmed by enemy hordes. So a bit of strategy is involved after all—not nearly on the level of *Kessen*, but not as straightforward as your standard beat-'em-up either.

For those that played (and enjoyed) *Berserk* on DC, *DW2* is definitely you're game! For those that enjoy mindless killing, you'll find yourself right at home in the blood-soaked battlefields of feudal China! For those that want substance and high concept... well, you're not going to find much of that on the PS2 at this point. So until games with more depth arrive, mainly in the form of *Munch's Oddysee* and *Dark Cloud*, Koei's *Dynasty Warriors 2* might just make the wait a bit more interesting—if you can call mass killing interesting that is.

Fury's Note: No ancient Chinese warriors were harmed in the making of this game.







Viewpoint Score	Developer - Koei	1 Player	Fury: 900 slain ancient Chinese
·89	Publisher - Koei	Available Oct 26	soldiers can't be wrong...

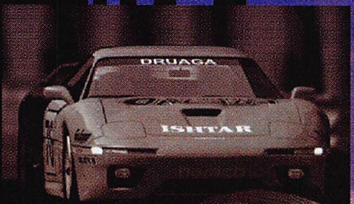
R REVIEW

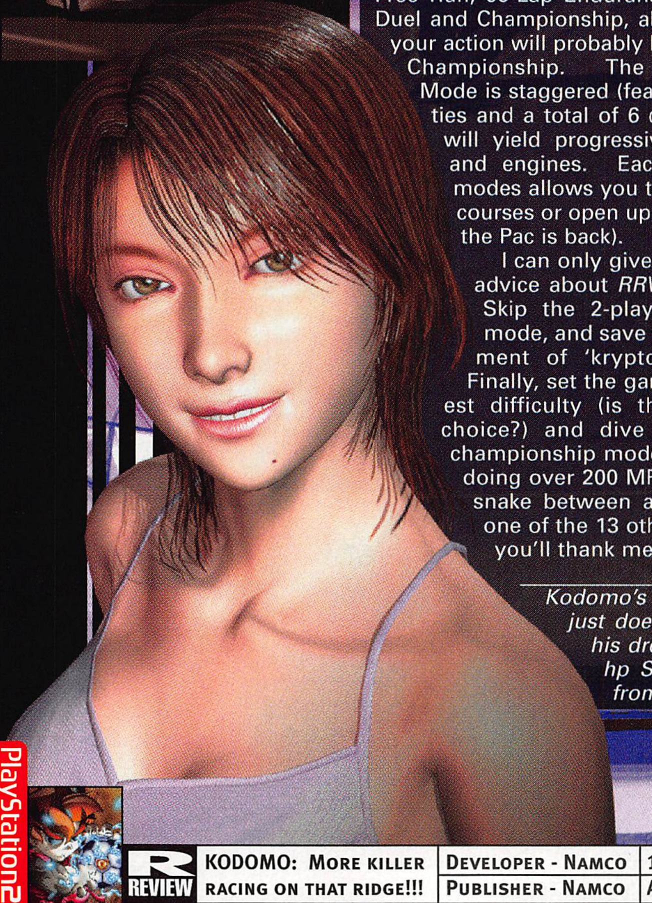
PlayStation2

RIDGE RACER V









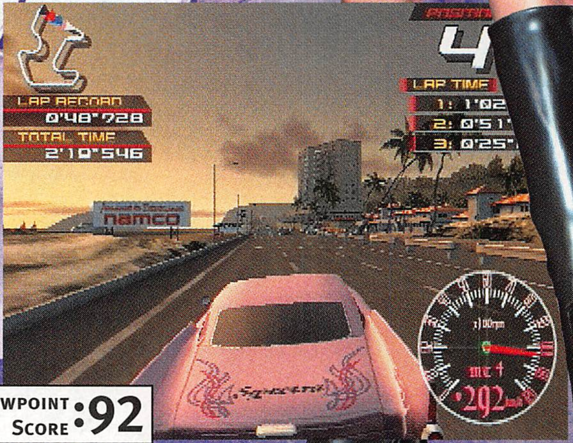














Picture the scene: ECM calls me at 8:45 this morning, ranting about why I haven't arrived at his apartment to drive him to work (car-pooling, it's a bitch). I, after rolling over and picking up the phone only moments before, assure him that I am indeed awake and on my way. Sadly, this is not the first time I've overslept (twice this week as a matter of fact), and when I finally do make the jaunt over to 'the good side of the tracks,' my semi-concious state is greeted with 3 words from ECM: "*Ridge Racer V*?"

"Yes. *Ridge Racer V*"

Quite honestly, most of the Japanese PS2 games to date have had one sad truth in common—namely the fact that they suck. It's a very tough thing to wade through the likes of *TV DJ*, *Fantavision*, *Driving Emotion Type: S* (and so on), just to hit pay dirt and get one exceptional title. Nevertheless, that's exactly what *Ridge Racer V* is...

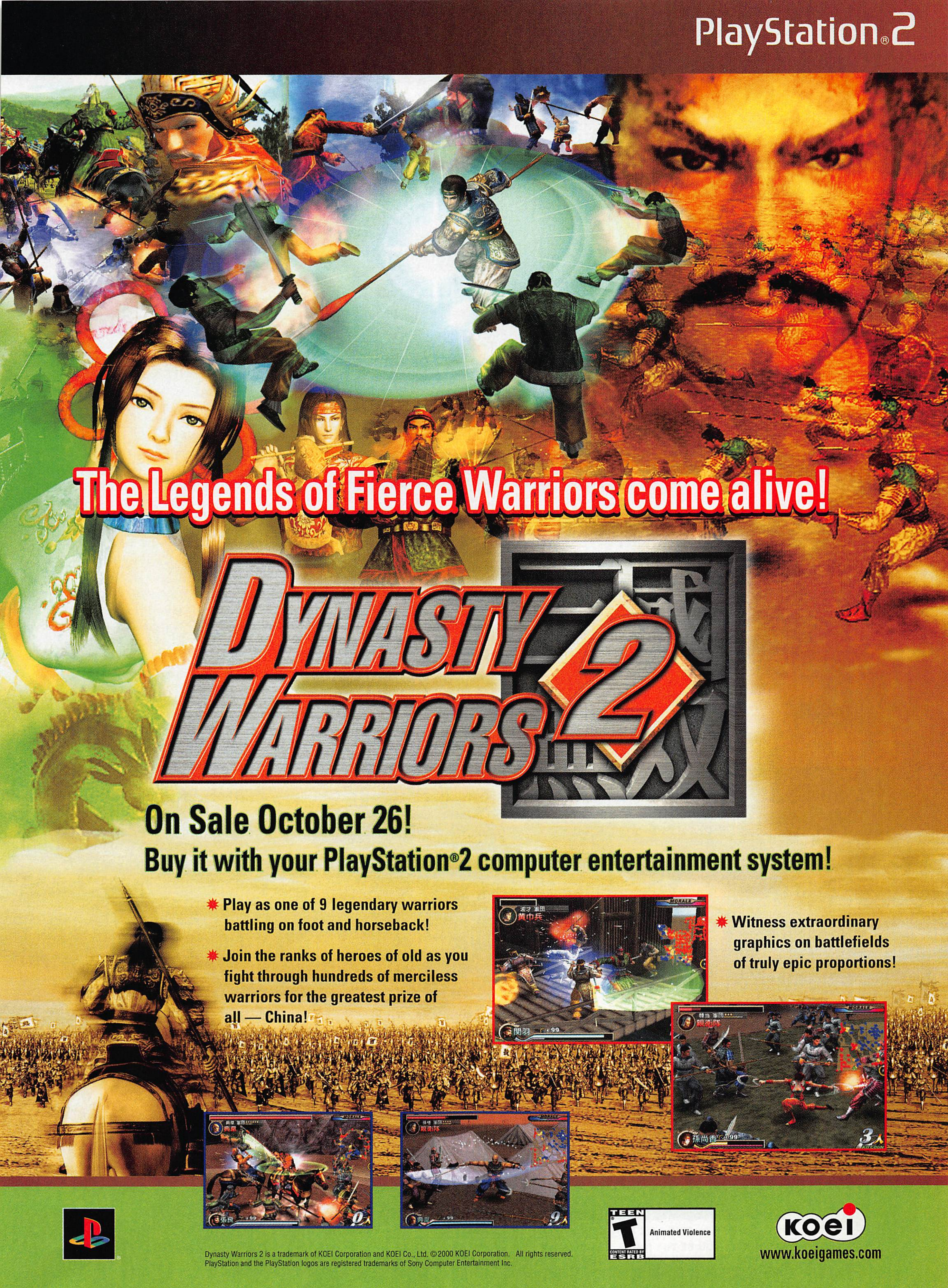
The numbers don't lie. RRV features 8 tracks, 5 modes of play and over 20 different cars to race. The tracks themselves are exquisitely rendered and have much more distance than any console racer's effort, although you can expect to see jagged lines and edges as the course approaches. Each one of the cars has a distinctive look (as well as a varying set of handling/accleration/speed attributes), right down to the calipers on brakes and sponser stickers that adorn almost every panel of the cars.

RRV is broken down into several areas: Free Run, 99-Lap Endurance, Time Attack, Duel and Championship, although most of your action will probably be limited to the Championship. The Championship Mode is staggered (featuring 3 difficulties and a total of 6 challenges), and will yield progressively faster cars and engines. Each of the other modes allows you to either practice courses or open up new cars (yes... the Pac is back).

I can only give you 3 pieces of advice about *RRV*: 1) Buy it. 2) Skip the 2-player split screen mode, and save yourself the torment of 'kryptonite fog'. 3) Finally, set the game on the hardest difficulty (is there any other choice?) and dive right into the championship mode. When you're doing over 200 MPH and trying to snake between a hard turn and one of the 13 other competitors, you'll thank me for it.

Kodomo's Mazda Millenia just doesn't compare to his dream car, a 1000-hp Skyline imported from Japan.

R REVIEW	KODOMO: MORE KILLER RACING ON THAT RIDGE!!!	DEVELOPER - NAMCO PUBLISHER - NAMCO	1-2 PLAYERS AVAILABLE OCT 26	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 92



PlayStation®2
The Legends of Fierce Warriors come alive!
DYNASTY WARRIORS 2
On Sale October 26!
Buy it with your PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system!
Play as one of 9 legendary warriors battling on foot and horseback!
Join the ranks of heroes of old as you fight through hundreds of merciless warriors for the greatest prize of all — China!
Witness extraordinary graphics on battlefields of truly epic proportions!
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
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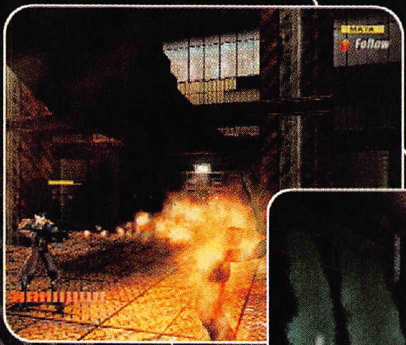




If you can wade through the hype surrounding the PlayStation 2, you might come to the conclusion that regardless of how powerful the system is, more than half of the launch games are mediocre. Now you can talk to me all day about the learning curve, as developers sift through the odds and ends of the system's hardware, but truth is, not all games receive grade "A" treatment... no matter the console or company. In this case, EA obviously went all out on titles like *FIFA 2000* and *Snowboard Supercross*, and gave their "B" team the pleasure of crafting their third PS2 installment, *X Squad*. Having just been recently released in Japan to a whopping 15,000 unit sell through, apparently I wasn't the only one who thought the game wound up with less-than-stellar design. But oddly, as I delved further into *X Squad* it began to grow on me, much in the same way *Carrier* on the DC and *Silent Bomber* on PS managed to captivate me. They're certainly not the greatest games made nor do they offer an amazing visual assault, but manage to deliver enough quality action to satisfy willing participants. And that's exactly where *X Squad* falls.



Switch flipping... say it ain't so. Remember, I didn't say *X Squad* was innovative, I said it had cool action. It's true that after spending twenty minutes you'll realize the game is classic switch flipping at its best, as you spend each level in an endless pursuit to unlock doors and elevators by means of hidden control panels, but the action in between makes it all worthwhile. And while the characters do appear in the third person perspective, the game truthfully is far more reminiscent of a 1st person shooter. Actually, allow me to correct that—*X Squad* resembles the **story mode** of your standard FPS... you know, the ones that are in place just for the sake of having them in (kind of like the story mode in *Quake 2* for N64 or PS). But again, regardless of the lackluster mission objectives, the action soon settles into some good ol' frenzied wall to wall killing. If that's enough for ya, if you're simply after straightforward "no thought involved" action centering on bazookas, flame-throwers etc. this just might be your game.

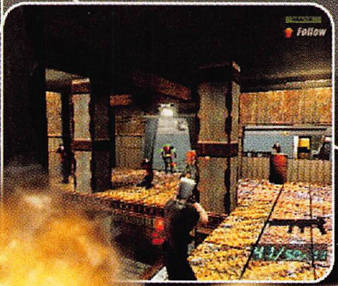


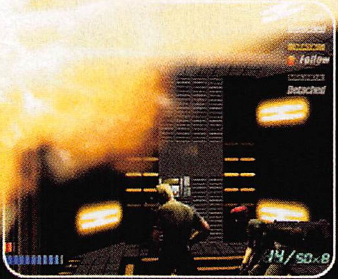
Egad, innovation? Was I wrong, does *X Squad* actually offer more than a mere body count? While innovation might actually be a strong word in this case, there is in fact more to things than I originally thought. Other than controlling your main character Ash, EA has given players the ability to command three other members of your party similar to *I Spy* on DC (hence the "squad" part of the title). As part of the options, you can tailor whether you want your companions to act in an aggressive fashion or to sneak through the hallways as stealthy mercenaries. Also, you can give basic commands on the fly such as "follow," "recon" and "stay." And if you find yourself low on health or shields, you can simply move items around depending on which characters are injured and need immediate assistance. Of course you can just be a cruel SOB and move everything to your own character... so you lose a few compadres along the way—the battlefield is a cruel place after all.



In light of launch titles like *Tekken Tag* and *DOA2*, EA's probably not going to turn many heads with *X Squad*. It's a fine game to play in between the fighters and, well... err, fighters on the system, but if it's a graphical example of super PS2 processing power your after, best look elsewhere. *X Squad* is definitely a decent looking game with some interesting level architecture and nice character models, but not **anything** that lives up to the mountain of hype we've been sifting through since the PS2 was first announced. Perhaps nothing ever will...

Fury would like people to know that since he overpaid for his PS2 he deserves lots of sympathy.



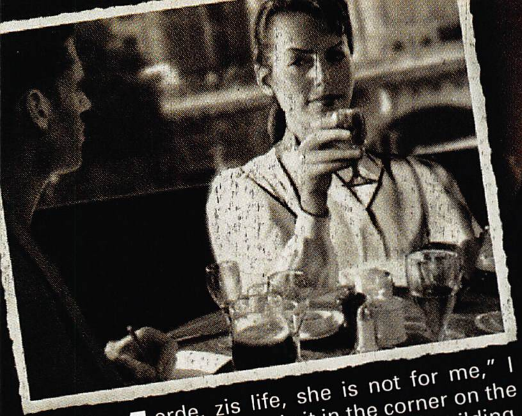




X SQUAD

R REVIEW	FURY: SWITCH FLIPPING OR FLIP SWITCHING... YOU BE THE JUDGE.	DEVELOPER - EA PUBLISHER - EA	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE OCT 26	VIEWPOINT SCORE :80


"THE KEY TO SUCCESS
CAN BE PUZZLING."
Set out on the expedition of a lifetime with this new action/adventure puzzler that will test your skills to the limit in the ultimate race against time. Explore for hidden keys to unlock helpful monsters, cool artifacts, and much more. Unearth some serious fun as you encounter all your Monster Rancher favorites... and some new ones too!
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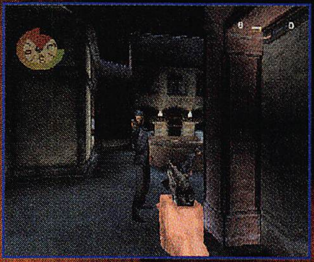


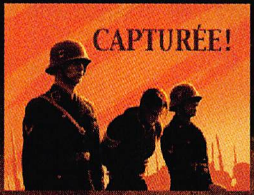
"Merde, zis life, she is not for me," I mumble, as I sit in the corner on the 2nd story of a dilapidated building, looking at an empty pistol in one hand and a Molotov cocktail in the other. Outside, lying in wait, a sizable portion of the German National army is taking potshots at the building, alternating between shooting and tossing grenades. The shattering audible onslaught is only broken up by shouting, calling for the tank. "It wasn't always like zis... zings were once good... what has happened to France?"













Well, if you can imagine hell on earth, you've got a good start at understanding occupied France during WWII. Better yet, save that mental power for other things, 'cause Electronic Arts has done the work for you, bringing the palpable (look it up) sting of war to your PlayStation.

As far a sequels go, *Medal of Honor: Underground* doesn't look like an obvious improvement over the original. The same first-person shooting engine is used, with different locales. Graphically, it's just about the same, looking good on the PS, but sullied and tainted to those roaming the 128-bit landscape. Looks can be deceiving though, and Underground improves on a good thing.

As Mannon, a young French girl, you are quickly recruited into the ranks of the super secret spy squad called the "OSS." Sure, most of France surrendered right after hearing the words "Gutten Tag," but a underground resistance has been formed with one goal in mind: Disrupt the German war machine as much as possible, while the Allies attack head on. To do so, you must fight through 7 missions (each one split into multiple parts), from the desert of Africa to the hills of France and Germany. Orders ranging from the direct (destroying Anti-Aircraft guns or Panzer Tanks) to the sublime (infiltrating highly secure compounds) are on tap, and you'd better eat your oatmeal because *Underground* is not for the weak. Enemy AI has been significantly improved, resulting in soldiers that duck behind objects after shooting, race to kick or throw 'undercooked' grenades back at you and will generally kill you very quickly when in packs.





MEDAL OF HONOR UNDERGROUND™

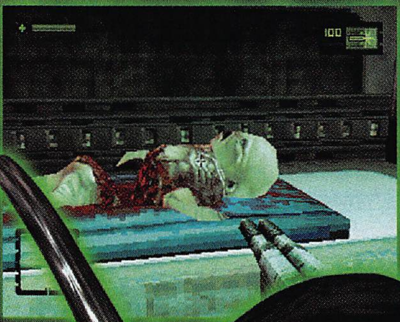
MOH:U is quite a surprise, packing the right amount of challenge, frightening ambiance (listen for the screams as you toss a grenade) and sheer fun. Even the multiplayer mode is solid. For the best first person shooter the aged PlayStation is likely to see, *Underground* delivers.

Kodomo dreams of someday freeing the U.S.A. from the malicious evil shackles of American football.





R REVIEW | KODOMO: *Le Resistance* lives on... | Developer - Dreamworks | Publisher - Electronic Arts | 1-2 Players | Available Now | Viewpoint Score :83





If you tuned out of the *Alien* movies after Jim Cameron's stunning *Aliens* outing (which sadly signaled Michael Biehn's metamorphosis into the Jan-Michael Vincent of the '90s), I can fully understand. While the first (directed by *Gladiator*'s Ridley Scott) and second movies were good, the subsequent *Alien 3* and *Alien Resurrection* were more akin to a steaming pile of 'number 2.' So, what happens when you make a game of that (god willing) final movie in the series?

Well, much like the game itself (which languished for a few years and was once of the 3rd person action variety), it's been a tough road for Ellen Ripley. Bear with me as you get the full synopsis in one sentence and 71 words: 57 years after *Alien*, she was sent back to LV-426, only to escape and crash on a penal colony with Newt and Corporal Hicks (both of whom died without ever appearing), where she was chased by aliens yet again and finally, after discovering she was impregnated with a 'mother alien', dove head first into a molten hot turbine, and then awoke 200 years later as a clone on a spaceship. Well, at least it wasn't revealed that Ripley hailed from the planet Zeist...

Given the extensive background, you might think that the game is also convoluted and tough to grasp, but, thankfully, that isn't the case. *AR* is a straight-up First Person Shooter and, despite a few puzzle elements (read: pull that lever, get that card, etc.), the focus is mainly on avoiding/killing USM Auriga crew members and a host of

ALIEN RESURRECTION



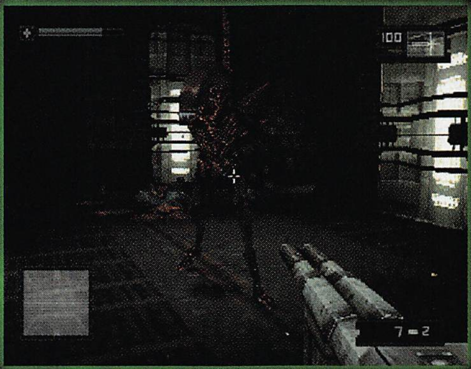
aliens. Of course, you'll come across face huggers, warriors and the queen alien during your quest to get to the escape ship, called the Betty. Ripley isn't the only playable character, USM marine Distephano, along with Betty crew members Call and Christie will also be playable on a few of the 10 levels. Each character will have common weapons (such as the standard handgun), but can also use a pulse rifle, flamethrower and a shotgun, as well as other, more powerful, weapons.

AR begins with the statement "This game is best played in the dark," and that's the best advice. The enemy models, both marines and aliens aren't going to win any prizes for looks, but when you keep them in context with the massive, dynamically lit environments (which, The Judge tells me, actually stream different textures as you progress) they do the job well. Best of all, *AR* is a tough game (and I mean, *very* tough on the 'hard' setting) and will give you at least a month's worth of solid challenge. Provided you can live that long, of course...

Kodomo wanted to be cloned, but the people have spoken and one Kodomo is more than enough...









Viewpoint Score	Developer - Argonaut	1 Player	Kodomo: I
:81	Publisher - Fox Interactive	Available Nov	want Winona!

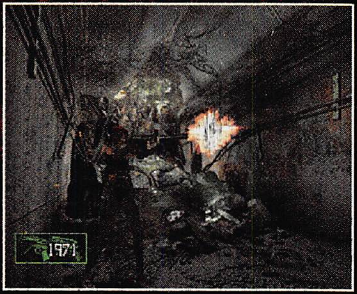
Review

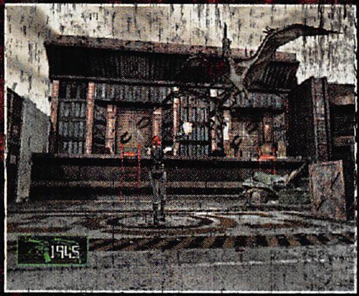
PlayStation



Dino Crisis 2







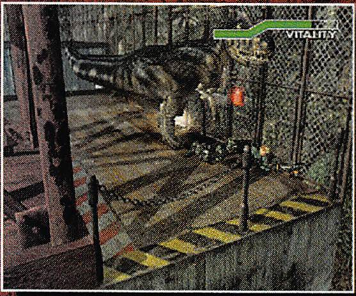
For nearly a decade, Capcom has had a simple winning formula that has vaulted the company to the peaks of success, all the while laying a path for other companies to try and imitate. Simply put, "Make successful game, then merge/spin-off/modify for as long as you can.' Don't get me wrong, Capcom has created some of the most refreshing and innovative games to date, but is it always a good idea to keep a series running, especially when that series is just a shadow of something else?

Well, in the case of *Dino Crisis 2*, the answer is an unresolved 'maybe.' Despite a massive departure from the formula of the original *DC*, the sequel offers little in the way of the top-notch story and game-play elements that have marked each Capcom 'Survival Horror' title to date.



A year has passed since the events in *DC*, and the heroine, Regina, now finds herself tagging along with the T.R.A.C.T team to investigate strange goings on in the Midwest. It seems that a corporation has acquired the "Third Energy" research (also from *DC*) and intended to further develop it, only to have the entire town and its surroundings vanish. Much to the dismay of the 1,300 or so residents, where once a town stood now festers a dinosaur-laden island.

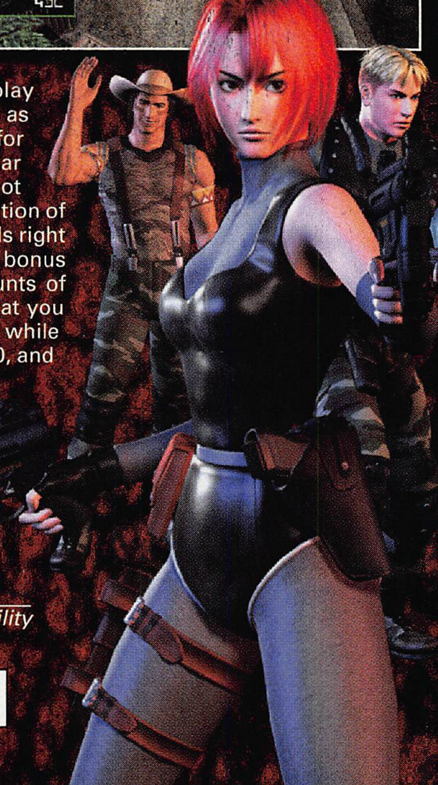
Similar to the zapping system used in *Resident Evil 2*, you have 2 characters to use throughout the game (S.O.R.T.S. Regina and T.R.A.C.T.S. Brad), but are restricted to playing them at specific points in the story. The comparisons don't end there, though, as the polygonal backgrounds have gone the way of the dinosaur (couldn't resist...), and are replaced by the *RE* bread-and-butter pre-rendered ones.



Unfortunately, this doesn't bode well for gameplay because, with a new focus on killing as many dinosaurs as possible in any given 'room' and attaining bonus points for doing so, you often get attacked by a dinosaur as you near the edge of a screen. Sure, the auto aim and ability to shoot while moving help, but both are outmatched by the frustration of 'cheap hits' and a lack of serious challenge. Play your cards right and, even on the highest setting, you'll amass enough bonus points to buy overly powerful weapons or insane amounts of ammunition very early on. Combine that with the fact that you can get upwards of 20,000 points in a room with raptors, while simply running from a massive T-Rex that yields only 5,000, and you'll understand exactly what balanced game play **isn't**.

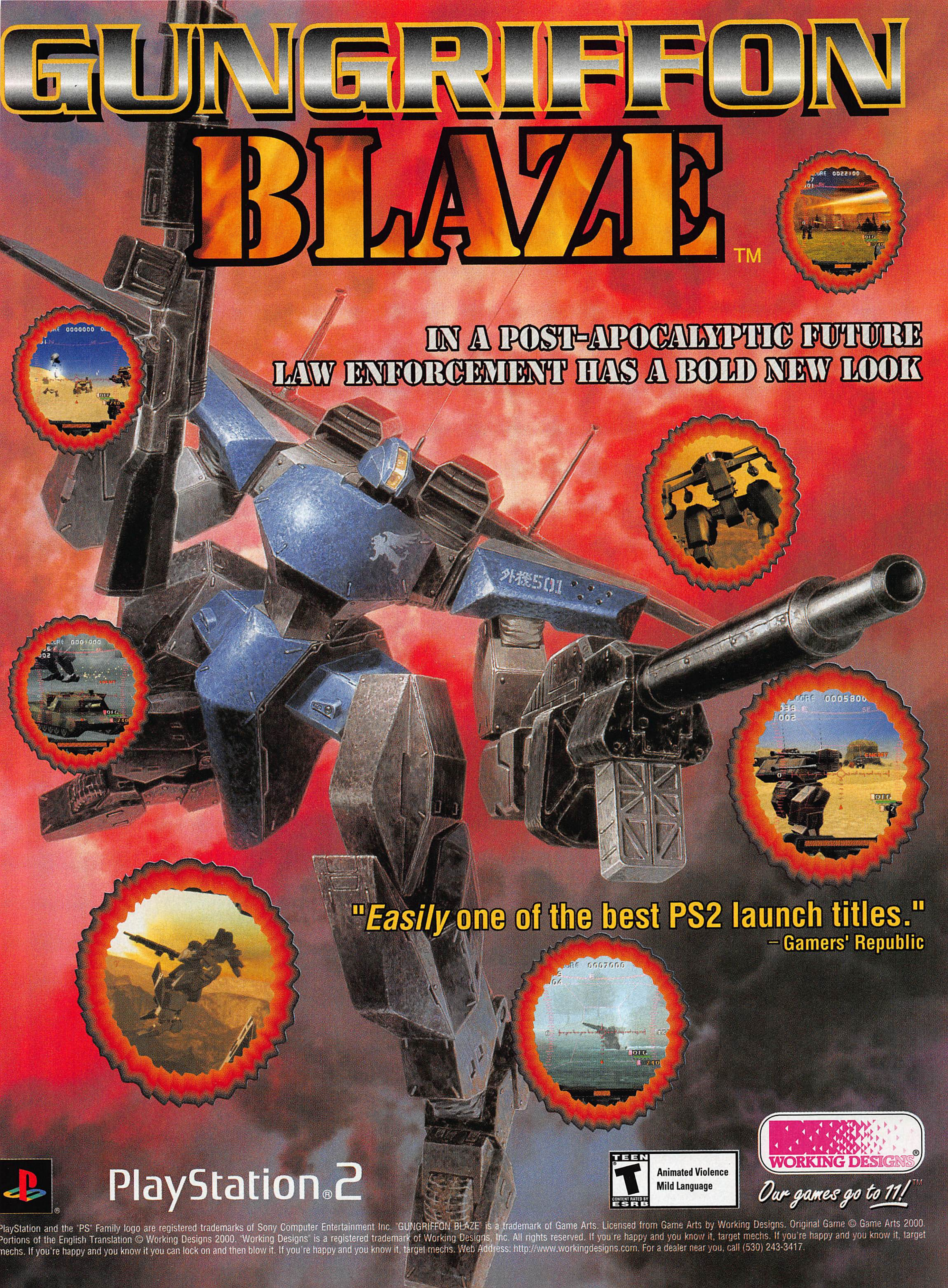


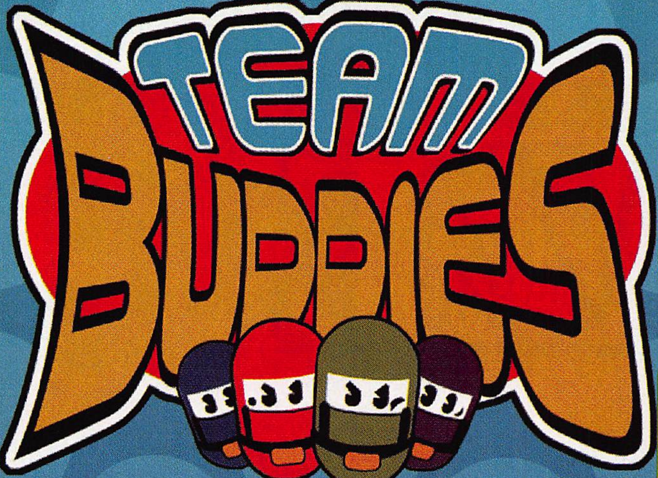
When all is said and done, you've got an adequate sequel, which strays too far into familiar territory and just can't surpass the potential that it once held. It's still better than almost every imitator out there, but not quite up to the Capcom lofty standard and merits little more than a rental.



Kodomo oft dreams of leaving Hollywood for the tranquility of hunting dinosaurs...

R REVIEW	KODOMO: WELL, IT'S BETTER THAN *HIGHLANDER 2*...	DEVELOPER - CAPCOM PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW	VIEWPOINT SCORE :86


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LAW ENFORCEMENT HAS A BOLD NEW LOOK
"Easily one of the best PS2 launch titles."
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Team Buddies

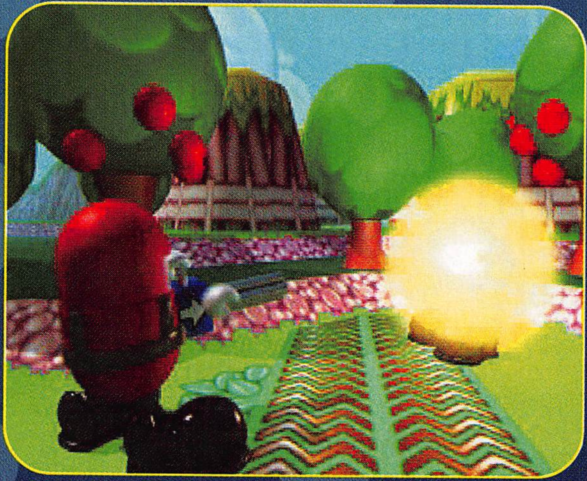








Argh! The more time I spend with *Team Buddies*, the more I lose hope. While there is a certain degree of sadomasochism within me <nods at the 100% saved *Rayman* certificate of authenticity>, this game seems to taunt me from the other side of a morass of gaming quicksand. Do I dare wade any further? Oh, the end is in sight, but reaching it will involve traversing a gauntlet of gaming agony, wracked with controller-tossing fits and pleas in the name of all that's sacred. Simply put, this game is balls hard. The learning curve goes from "Piece of cake" (first mission) to "Whoa Nelly!" (second mission) to kicking-the-cat (third mission) to "Maybe vice-presidential candidate Lieberman is right. Video Games DO cause violence" (fourth mission). This real-time strategy game will put hair on your chest... or beat you into submission till you're a quivering mass of casual gaming jelly reaching for that copy of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*... <slaps your hand> Stop that! This is *GameFan*, Private. Not some chickenshit outfit like those Overly Pretentious Magazines. On your feet, soldier!



Now while I said this game is hard, I didn't say it was impossible. For every five times you slip and fall while scaling that daunting precipice, you'll gain an inch... and that little bit of victory has never tasted so sweet. Don't expect to be doing this right away, however. *Team Buddies* has got some complex play mechanics and controls that take some getting used to. Like your standard RTS, *TB* involves splitting time between production and combat. Build orders are issued to your fellow buddies with the L2 button to cycle through the production options. Combat is done via "various and sundry" (© & ™ 2000, ECM Enterprises Ltd.) weapons of mass destruction, including shotguns, bazookas, bombs, tanks, gatling guns, and more. The R1 button acts as a lock-on, but you won't be able to get too trigger happy—elevation and splash damage are deadly if not taken into account. Pull that trigger at point blank range, and your cutesy colorful brains will be splattered all over the ground.

Speaking of cute, this game's overflowing with bright colors, happy animals, and rubber buildings... which makes the ensuing carnage that much more entertaining. As for the multi-player, I've never been a fan of split screen warfare in an RTS. It's fun to beat up your friends... and it's even better when you can do it in a game. But *TB's* multi-player just devolves into mindless carnage, while the single-player game is incredibly deep, requiring lots of strategy and skill. My only gripes are: 1) the camera can be a major hindrance at times because scenery won't go transparent so you can see. 2) the buddies are so dumb they will frequently get themselves killed by friendly fire. In the end, don't sell this game short because it's cute. There's a lot of depth and fun here... assuming you can handle the frustration factor. So if you want to earn your stripes, soldier, check out *Team Buddies* now!

Eggo wishes it were only that easy to build a ninja buddy.





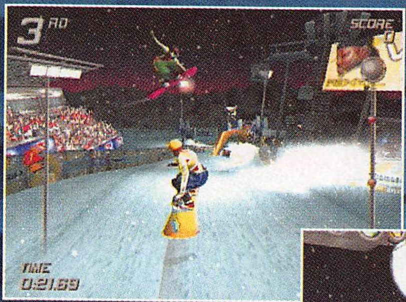


R REVIEW

Eggo: This is Midway's true *Gauntlet*.	Developer - Camden Studio	1-4 Players	Viewpoint Score :87
	Publisher - Midway	Available Now	


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THE LOST PLANET
Believe in Your Pilots
Hope for the Best
Pray for a Savior
"A visual feast for PS2 owners...in shooter heaven."
– Gamers' Republic
PlayStation®2
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SSX

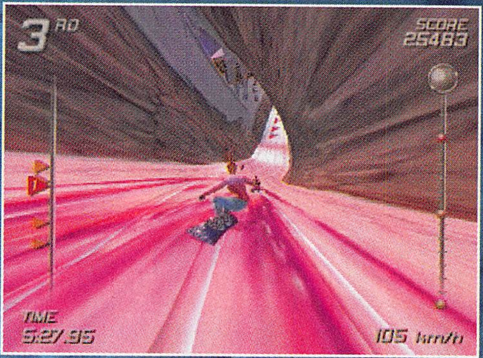
Although they will never admit it, EA shot themselves in the foot when the opted not to develop for the Dreamcast. Two million screaming Sega heads were denied the chance to see some of EA's most popular franchises make the jump to the 128-bit level. While Visual Concepts managed to squelch some of that thirst (who needs *Madden* when you have *NFL2K1*), the system nonetheless suffered from lack of the video game giant's software.

The Electronic Arts shareholders may rest a bit easier now, though, with the launch of the PS2. Electronic Arts has firmly positioned itself for the PS2 launch with some solid titles, to be followed shortly after with a few more. While *Madden* will be the focus of most of the attention (and consumer dollars), *SSX* should not be overlooked.

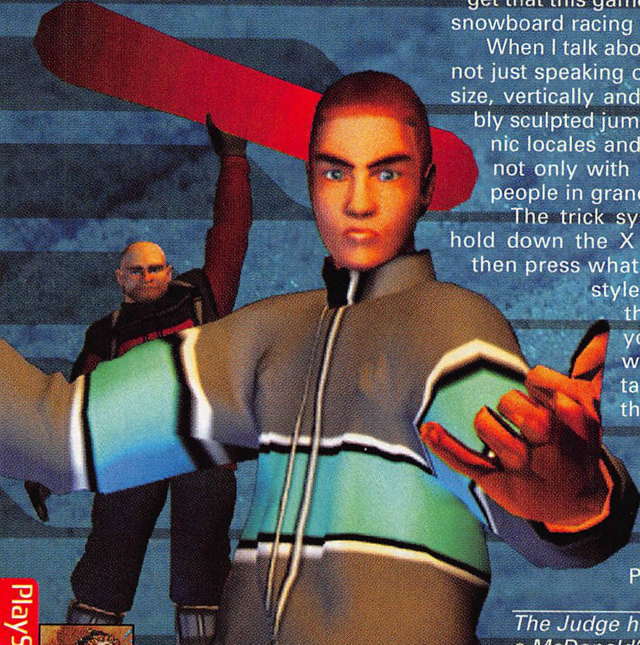


SSX is a stunning and addictive snowboard hybrid that sets itself apart from many of the PS2's other launch titles because it actually seems to utilize the power of the machine (not to be flippant, but looking at some of these titles I wonder where all of the effort went and whether or not the developers really knew what they were doing). A racing title that features excellent gameplay, insane tricks and some of the biggest race courses I have ever seen, *SSX* is the kind of larger-than-life gaming I was expecting to see on the PS2 when I first envisioned it.

Make no mistake about it, *SSX* offers the gamer nothing new. Everything in *SSX* I have seen somewhere before, if not in *Cool Boarders* and *1080˚*, then in *Wipeout* or *Snowboard Kids*. The features, options and gameplay are all familiar; there is little room left for originality in these areas. What *SSX* does, is deliver them to us in such a remarkable package that we quickly forget that this game, in essence, differs little from snowboard racing games of the past.



When I talk about the size of the courses, I am not just speaking of their length but their overall size, vertically and horizontally. Huge, impossibly sculpted jumps and turns; archetypical scenic locales and gorgeous backgrounds, filled not only with intense sky, but teeming with people in grandstands.



The trick system is quite intuitive. You hold down the X button to set the jump and then press whatever other buttons to select different styles of trick. Once airborne, you can then go into a freestyle mode where you can twist and turn and grab any way you like. The result? Some spectacular tricks that will be as varied as they are eye-popping.



The entire game scintillates; that is the only way I can properly describe it. When you find yourself faced with the indecision of what games to buy, grab *SSX*. It may be the most crowd pleasing game at the PlayStation 2 launch.

The Judge has been waiting for a chance to use the word "scintillates" ever since he heard a McDonald's employee us it in reference to a burger.

REVIEW	THE JUDGE: SLIP SLIDIN' AWAY...	DEVELOPER - EA PUBLISHER - EA	1-2 PLAYERS AVAILABLE OCT 26	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 94


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A s the centuries wear on, Earth has become an overpopulated megalopolis that has nowhere to build but up. Reaching toward the sky, miles high, cities become enormous towers with interconnecting walkways, highways and byways, blacking out the sun for lower levels of the skyscrapers. For those of you familiar with the *Star Wars* books, these cities resemble Coruscant, capitol city of the Republic... and Tokyo in about 20 years.

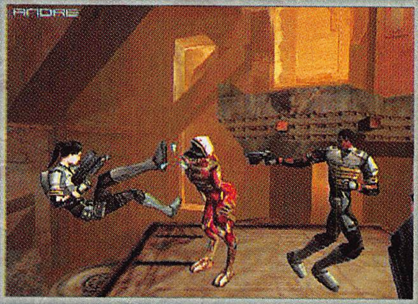
The social ladder becomes more stratified with the affluent members of society residing in the upper levels, awash in sunlight. The less wealthy you are, the further down the towers you live, with the poor ultimately living out their entire lives devoid of surface contact and surrounded by the criminal element and cultist crazies—in other words, Hollywood. What lies at the very bottom of the towers, where the barren surface of the earth has seen no sunlight in hundreds of years? No humans dare travel that far into the bowels of their man-made, concrete jungle... until now.

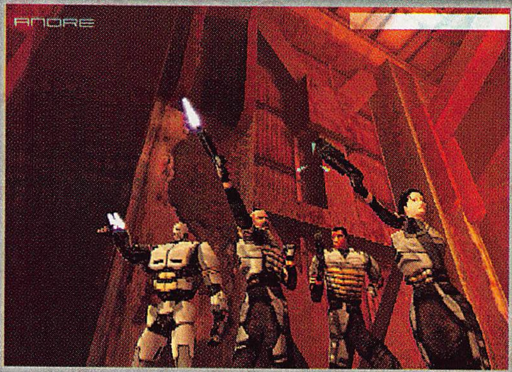
Enter the UPA: Urban Protection Agency. In order to continuously build up, it has become necessary to send engineering teams lower in order to strengthen the bases of the buildings. As of late, however, these teams have gone missing. Even more mysterious—and horrifying—is the appearance of horribly mutated humanoids (we know them as C.H.U.D.) on the surface levels, attacking the well-to-do. The UPA's job is to check out these kind of disturbances. This time, when they are ordered to check out these mysterious goings-on, they get more than they bargained for.







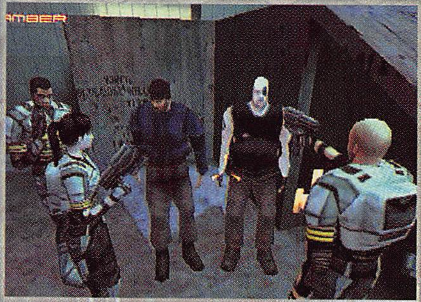




Eden is a combination of FPS and 3rd person adventure that has you controlling all members of a four-man team of specialists. There is the commander, who has the all-around skills required for the likes of a Hannibal Smith (Mr. T was on Conan O'Brien last night so I have A-Team on the brain), a hacker capable of cracking her way into any mainframe, an engineer and a robot or cyborg-type who is into heavy weapons. Using split screen (no Sega.net here) players can each take control of one team member.

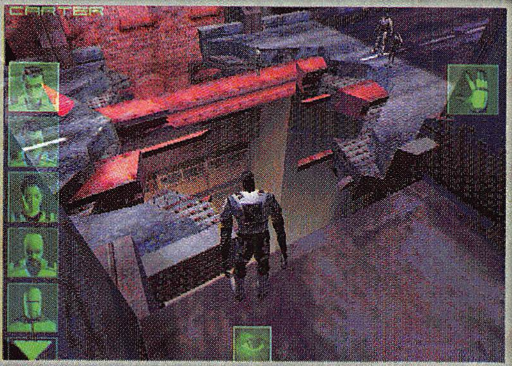
Right now this game looks pretty tight. The potential problem of FPS type action being hard to get a handle on in 3rd person mode has been solved and controlling all the members while playing solo is much easier with some good AI for off-members and an easy menu to hop from one character to another. The levels are absolutely massive and require a fair amount of exploration. Expect a lot of puzzle elements like in *Tomb Raider* where you'll have one of the characters going one place to use his or her expertise to unlock other areas for the other characters to pass through.

If they can keep the game interesting at later levels and get some carnage in there, *Eden* could turn out to be one of the best first gen titles for the PS2. J



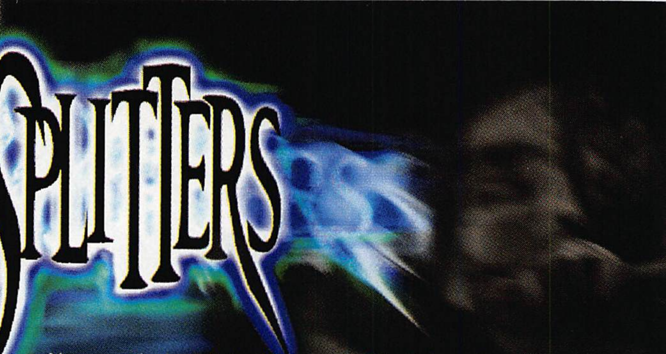


PROJECT EDEN



PREVIEW	THE JUDGE: BORN OF THE ONE LIGHT...	DEVELOPER - CORE	1-4 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - EIDOS	AVAILABLE 1ST QTR '01


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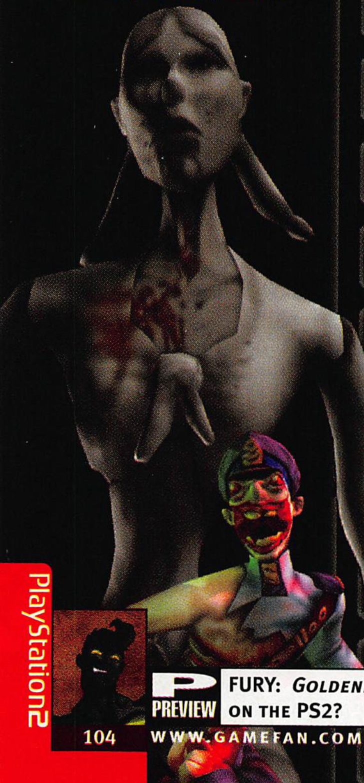


TimeSplitters

You've played *GoldenEye*, I've played *GoldenEye*—hell, the entire world has played *GoldenEye*. But what most casual gamers don't know is that the team responsible for 007 on the N64 has left the evergreen pastures of Rare for... well, greener pastures—greener pastures by the name of Sony <cue black clouds and rolling thunder>.

While I'm not exactly sure what transpired over at Rare, at some point in *Perfect Dark*'s lengthy development cycle the *GoldenEye* team (now looking to outdo themselves in Joanna Dark's futuristic landscape) left the cushy English offices of NCL's better half, Rareware, to form a new development team named Free Radical. Their first mission: Create a first person shooter for Sony's wonder console that adheres to two main points at all times: 1) a solid "non compromising" frame rate and 2) more on-screen enemies than any FPS to date. With all the raw power of the PS2 at hand, you'd think Free Radical's goal would be a cakewalk. But in the world I live in, the real world, where hype can only take you so far, things really aren't as easy as they seem.



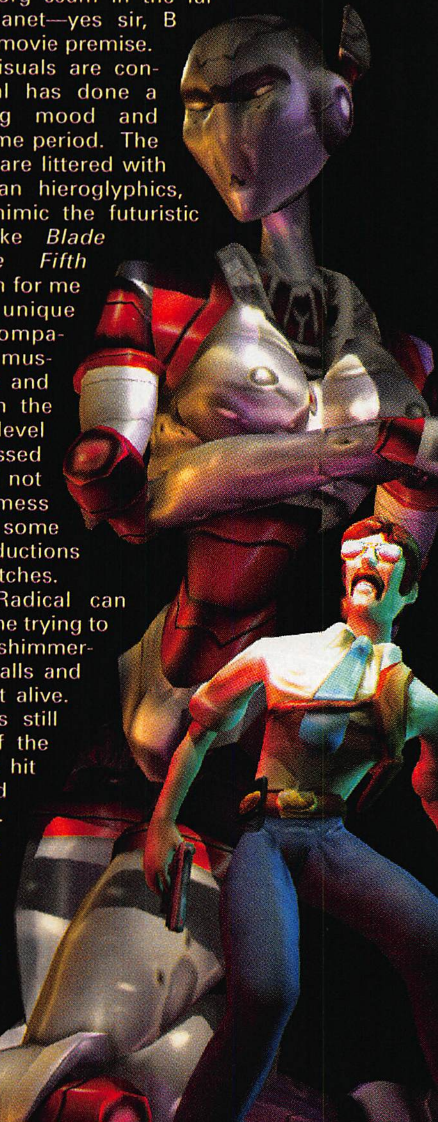


Now rewind a bit to this year's E3. Other than *TimeSplitters* (which was only shown behind closed doors), Sony had only one PS2 FPS on display: *Unreal Tournament.* Though *UT* was early, like most games at the show, its horrendous frame rate was worth taking note of (15 fps if I'm not mistaken). Indeed, the early rev of *UT* certainly made the guys at Free Radical breathe a little easier. Of course, in the ever-changing world of development, *UT* is bound to get better... but so is *TimeSplitters.* As of late, the word from Infogrames is that *UT* will run at 45 fps sans online play. And all of a sudden, Free Radical's goal for a consistent frame rate (a solid 60 mind you) and tons of on-screen characters just got a bit juicier.

Taking its cue from the off-kilter world of B movies, the characters in *TS* resemble the best Hollywood misfits Tinseltown could offer up. Some appear to have been stripped out of some bad '50s mummy flick while others (the more futuristic looking ones) look like they're from the reject bin of Gene Roddenberry's mind. The varied look of the characters serves a purpose, though, and looks to complement the stages that take place in particular years ranging from the 1930s all the way up to 2035. Expect to be battling cultists in ancient Egyptian tombs and annihilating cyborg scum in the far regions of... The Planet—yes sir, B movie names for a B movie premise.

As far as *TS*'s visuals are concerned, Free Radical has done a great job matching mood and ambiance for each time period. The Tombs, for instance, are littered with tons of cool Egyptian hieroglyphics, while later stages mimic the futuristic look of movies like *Blade Runner* and *The Fifth Element.* The real fun for me however, is the unique weaponry that accompanies each era—from muskets to tommy guns and beyond. Also, when the game's completed, a level editor (which I witnessed in action at E3... and not some complex mess either) will make for some painfully simple productions of your own deathmatches.

Hopefully Free Radical can spend some added time trying to eliminate that pesky shimmering that makes the walls and ground appear almost alive. But regardless, *TS* is still looking to be one of the most frenzied FPS to hit the console world and better yet, the PS2. Perhaps not quite on the level of *GoldenEye* or *PD*, but something to definitely get excited about nonetheless. **F**

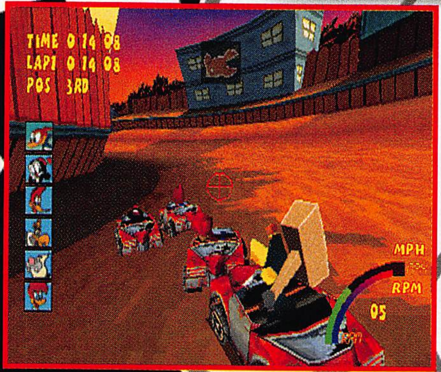


P PREVIEW	FURY: *GOLDENEYE* ON THE PS2?	DEVELOPER - FREE RADICAL	1-4 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - EIDOS	AVAILABLE OCT 26


TOMB RAIDER
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The Legacy
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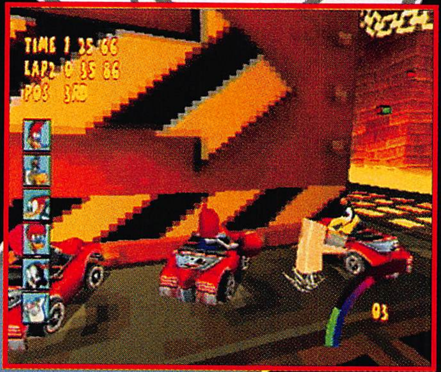
WOODY WOODPECKER RACING





















All I can say is that it is about time! You'd think the only cartoons ever made were Warner Brothers and Disney with the total lack of licenses circulating in the industry. One of the all time greats, Woody Woodpecker, is finally getting his just due... and it isn't starring in some bad platformer like *Marsupalami*, either. I can only hope that other licenses of this ilk will get picked up... *Transformers* and *Tom & Jerry*. Hell, a Hanna-Barbera *Laffalympics* game would have been perfect for this year's Australian Games. Would have been nice to actually see Precious Pup have some frames of animation...

Ok, back to the game at hand. *Woody Woodpecker Racing* is another kart style racing title featuring some of the most well-known characters from the Woody Woodpecker show (it's all about Chilly Willy). Some of the younger players out there probably have never even seen these great characters on morning or afternoon cartoons, but should enjoy racing them around the circuit.

You've got your eight playable characters with several power-ups to use to debilitate your enemies on the course. The weapons are fairly creative but still lack cool effects on impact. There are twelve tracks to race with multiple styles of race cars to use.

The engine is lookin' good, with a healthy framerate and a solid sense of speed. There is still plenty of time to optimize so I expect even better results on the final. The vehicle physics vary little from other kart racers and all of the same driving options and strategies are applicable (are we ever going to see anything beyond the power slide in one of these games?).

Will *Woody Woodpecker Racing* be able to distinguish itself from other kart fare, on the PlayStation? Probably not, beyond the license—but it will offer gamers another option. Hopefully Universal and Konami will explore some other less glutted genres for our favorite fowl to invade. Woody would make a great 3D platform mascot if the game were done well (and that is a big IF). Actually, if I had my way, they'd be making a Chilly Willy FPS where a crazed Chilly Willy stalks French Canadian fur traders at the Poles, blowing them away as they try and club baby seals. Now **that** would be fun! J

P PREVIEW

THE JUDGE: JUST WHAT WE NEED: ANOTHER KART RACER.	DEVELOPER - KONAMI	1-4 PLAYERS
	PUBLISHER - UNIVERSAL	AVAILABLE NOV



Lara and all of her tomb raiding has gotten stale and as musty as the locales she plumbs with now-annual frequency. The stories, while still appealing to the droves of mainstream gamers, have become tedious for those of us who live our lives as the hardcore. Push those buttons, pull those levers and back-track like a mad man (or mad woman as the case may be) in your quest to get to another level of sparse enemies and agitating puzzles—oh look, another reverse-puzzle... how refreshing. The franchise has become hamstrung by its need to follow linear stories with recurring themes.

Core has begun the Transition of Lara. In their upcoming *Tomb Raider* titles, they are beginning to break out of the *TR* tradition and move in different directions; the most radical coming on the PS2. While the PS2 Lara is a ways off (and will be saved for another issue) *Tomb Raider Chronicles*, which will probably be the last of the PlayStation *TR* games (never say never with a company like Eidos and a franchise like TR), is making its departure.

With Lara's future looking bleak (to say the least) this gave Core freedom to explore her life even more than before. *TRC* will take place only in the minds of those who knew Lara best, as they sit around a table, after her funeral, reminiscing about the adventures they had with her. You'll control Lara in each of the stories and they will vary in time and place. With no actual storyline or timeline to adhere to, TRC will offer up many different locales, objectives and gameplay elements, from standard lever pulling puzzles (aargh!) to straight-up fire fights.

While the graphics will differ little from the *Last Revelation*, there will be much emphasis put on the cinematic presentation of the game. Many different, dynamic, cameras will be used in order to offer a fresh style of gaming. There is a lot to be said to the proper use of the camera, so expect a more lively game. Also, the episodes of Lara's life, while from various times and places, will all help give the gamer a better understanding of who Lara is and why she did the things she did (this is for all of you out there that cannot separate fiction from reality; get out of your parents' basement, boys).

While most of the game remains a mystery, it is a safe assumption that control and mechanics will change nary a bit. Yes there are some new actions like tight-rope walking and hand to hand combat and a "search" action (yes you will see even more items to play with) and yes, Lara will once again defy gravity.

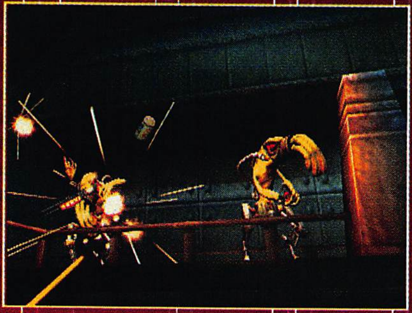
Developer - Core	1 Player	The Judge: Lara is, once again, feeling oh-so-fresh...
Publisher - Eidos	Available Nov	

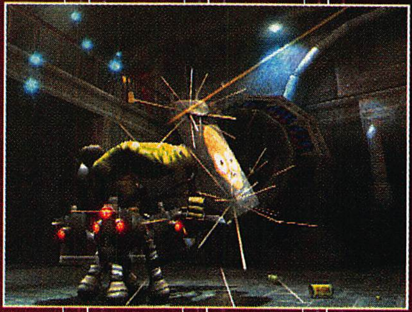
PREVIEW

COMING SOON

One of our favorite developers, Oddworld, has been hard at work on their newest (and greatest) opus. After a potentially disastrous blow was dealt to *Munch's* when the PS2 did not live up to the specs they promised, we are pleased to say that all is well in the House that Abe built. Lorne and company have made remarkable steps in fixing all of the game's problems, so now, once again, *Munch's Oddysee* looks like one of the best PS2 titles.



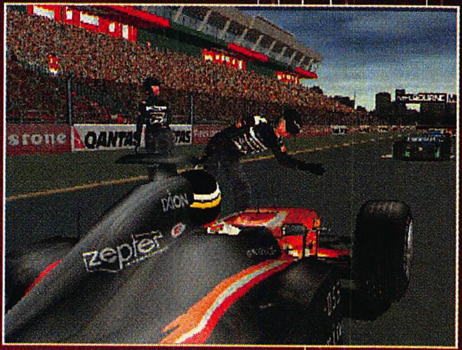


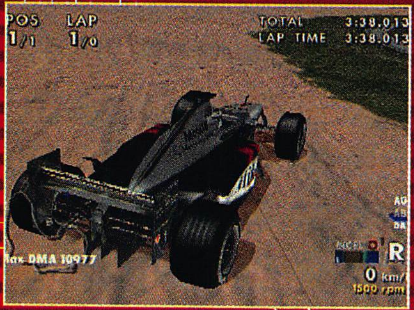


Munch's Oddysee

Developer
Oddworld Inhabitants
Publisher
Infogrames

El Niño has banned all Formula games form the sports section in protest to the seemingly endless stream of uninspired racing titles that glut every system. So, we'll cover it here. *F1 Championship* is a beautiful looking racer from UbiSoft, a company that knows how to dazzle with the eye candy. Expect nothing but the best of every aspect in *F1 Championship*, from high frame rate to realistic physics.







F1 Championship

Developer
UbiSoft
Publisher
UbiSoft

Rollercoaster Tycoon, from Hasbro, is still in the top ten for retail PC sales... and it's been out close to 2 years! Needless to say, it was a no-brainer for EA to take their popular *Theme Park* franchise and put a bit of a coaster spin on the newest installment. Eggo and The Judge are giddy with excitement over the thought of being able to build their own amusement parks on the PS2.







Theme Park Rollercoaster

Developer
Bullfrog
Publisher
Electronic Arts



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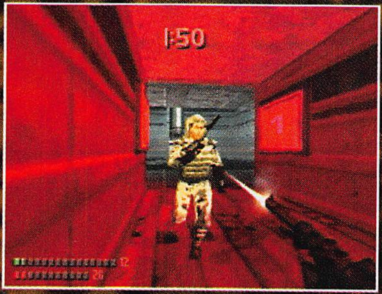
Nintendo 64: The Final Chapter

When the storied history of the N64's life comes to an auspicious close, it'll be remembered as the console of Nintendo and Rare. Between these two juggernauts of software development, they'll have crafted a legion of the finest games the world has ever seen, firmly stuffing all the nay-sayers that thought they'd never be able to compete with Sony into the nearest trash receptacle. Which is all well and good—after all, they **have** created many, many unearthly titles between the two of them, and they should certainly receive their fair share of accolades. But what people may just forget is that though there were few 3rd parties Nintendo could fully count on, there was one that backed them stronger than all the rest: Acclaim.

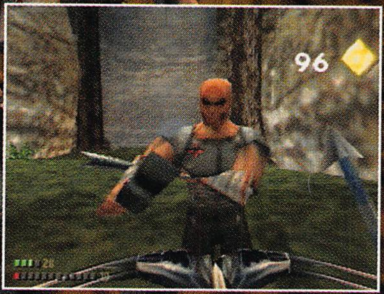
Oh yes, though reviled for several shoddy, rushed wrestling games and some insidiously poor PlayStation games (which they deserve much malign for), they truly shined on N64. In fact, outside of Rare, they managed to harness the graphical prowess of the cart-based behemoth unlike any other—Nintendo included. Games such as *All Star Baseball*, *Quarterback Club* and *Iggy's Reckin' Balls* not only pushed the gameplay envelope but also the limits of what a gamer could expect from the talented folks at certain of Acclaim's many development studios.

TUROK 3
SHADOW OF OBLIVION









I AM TUROK

But out of all of them, one franchise stood head and shoulders above the rest; one shining star to lead the way for all others; the pinnacle of N64 action adventures—*Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*.

When *Turok* exploded onto the gaming scene in early '97, it redefined what gamers could expect from a first person shooter. Featuring stunning graphics, incredible sound, and expertly designed gameplay (minus some very painful platforming sequences), *Turok* was an instant smash hit. Needless to say, there would be a sequel.

And going into the Christmas season of '98, there would be the sequel to end all sequels—*Turok 2: Seeds of Evil*. Featuring seemingly endless levels, it was almost universally panned, not just for individual levels that rivaled the size of most entire games, but for some horrendous slowdown that directly affected gameplay. However, if you could get past the labyrinthine level structure (how could anybody not like that?) and some quirky control, it was ultimately rewarding in a way no other FPS has ever been.



And now, as the final chapter in the *Turok* saga is written on the N64, it's quite clear that the team at Acclaim Studios Austin was going to go out with their heads held high, and deliver what may just be the greatest chapter in an epic trilogy of games...

Coming To A Theater Near You: Turok the Motion Picture?





If there's one thing that stands out about the *Turok* series (since chapter 2), it's the incredible storylines that rival RPGs in overall depth and complexity. You may think that's a ludicrous statement, but have you ever actually played *Turok 2* all the way through? The plot twists, sci-fi elements, and sheer scope lent a scope to it that few RPGs could match. And as with the last outing, chapter 3 features a staggering sci-fi epic as the backdrop for the meat-and-potato FPS action—I'd even go out on a limb and say that it's the single most intense, most compelling storyline a video game has seen in years. Fit for a movie translation? No question.

While I don't have much space to go into specific plot details, let's just say that the opening cinema alone, replete with stunning voice acting and intense facial animation, is the opening cinema to end all opening cinemas—bar none. Let's just say "You're too loud" is one of the most comedic/intense lines you'll ever hear.

And with just that single cinematic, you're drawn into a dark future where the fate of the world rests in the hands of the newest Turoks... yes, Turoks... plural.



NKOTB

After the stunning opening cinema, you're granted the choice of playing one of two characters: Joseph or Danielle Fireseed. Joseph has the 'ability' to utilize a set of night vision goggles and can squeeze through small, tightly packed areas—due to his stature (how 'bout that: a game where being short is a special ability... thanks Acclaim!). Danielle, on the other hand, has access to a grappling hook and can jump higher than Joseph. The key here is that depending upon whom you choose, the game changes accordingly.



While I won't tell you that this makes the game two completely different adventures (it doesn't), what it does do is inject some nice variety into the proceedings. For instance, if you complete the game with one character (or do what I did and play through the game in parallel) you'll get a nice side-story as each one does his or her part of the quest. So while Danielle may not get access to an area because she's too tall (love it!), Joseph can't swing on that handy grapple point over yonder, thus giving each character access to slightly different means of navigating the levels. A very nice addition, and something that does add significant replay value in light of the fact that the levels are nowhere near the scope of the second game (good or bad, you be the judge).

I Can See The Whites Of Their Eyes... In Letterbox Mode

While Acclaim valiantly attempted to get *T3* to run in hi-res mode at a rock-solid 30 hz, it just isn't happening: While the frame rate is far superior to the mess that was *T2*, sometimes it does nose-dive when things get hectic onscreen (too much geometry, too many enemies... which are the same thing, aren't they?). What do I recommend? While it isn't nearly as pretty to look at, I strongly urge you to play the game in low-res with letterbox mode on. I know that's not what you want to hear, but it's certainly the best way to keep the game at maximum playability.

And even in this condition, the game still shines: tremendous, interactive environs; huge enemies; stunning weapon effects—all this still manages to impress even in an age of Dreamcast and now, PlayStation 2. Those of you that are super-jaded can forget about being happy, but everyone else will be stunned by the 'living environments' that range from the jungle locales of *Unreal* to the industrial structures of *Half Life* (not to mention the gameplay inspiration both those PC beasts contributed to this game).

One Life Ends, And A New One Begins

Those this may herald the end of Turok's adventures on N64, one thing is for sure: they'll be back for more. However, until he (or she) makes its faithful debut on Game Cube, just know that you owe it to yourself to take this one last trek with the Fireseed clan. Now all I have to say is, get ready Tu-rok...

ECM doesn't often reveal his New Kids on the Block obsession to the world, so be sure and give him hell for it.







Viewpoint Score: 98	Developer - Acclaim	1 Player	ECM:
	Publisher - Acclaim	Available Now	N64 Opus

R Review





007 The World Is Not Enough

Well, now I've done it. That's right, I've given three N64 games in one issue a score of 90 or above... Now I sit patiently awaiting the inevitable "You Nintendo-biased s.o.b." e-mails that typically accompany anything that I have the gall, the effrontery, to like. Yep, first *Turok 3* (buy it now), then *Ogre Battle 64* (buy it now) and now, a game that I figured I'd be taking a big axe to when it was first announced: EA's <wince> *The World Is Not Enough—TWINE* to the ultra-hip <snicker>, 'we spend our entire pitiful little lives on the Internet' crowd. Sadly (?) though, *TWINE* is yet another "buy it now" game—could this be the best of the bunch?

As Fury touched on nary a month ago, *TWINE* is the sequel to *GoldenEye*, and though it's not by the gaming gods at Rare (actually they may have been demoted to demi-gods after *Jet Force Gemini*) you'd probably be surprised if you learned that *after* playing it. It's actually by another UK development house, Eurocom. Needless to say, following up a game of *GoldenEye*'s proportions is virtually impossible... maybe Eurocom should change their slogan to "Making the Impossible Look Possible." Got your attention yet? I thought so...

So what's so hot about *TWINE*? Well, for starters, everything. Gameplay, graphics, design—all of it is a completely top-notch, class act. If *TWINE* had debuted along side the master, it may have even drawn some sales away from the best game of '97—and best-selling two years running!!!



The missions are intense, the objectives multi-faceted (like *GE* and now *Perfect Dark*) and the game just plays incredibly well. While I won't go as far to say that it's better than Rare's super classic (after all, the second slice of pizza never tastes as good as the first) I will say that Eurocom has the N64 hardware dialed, has Rare's number and is ready for the elite league: not surprising that Sony/Universal trusted them with the all-imporant *Crash* franchise on PS2. Hell, now I'm 10x more excited about that game than I was before I played *TWINE*.







Not only is the gameplay ultra-hot and so reminiscent of *GoldenEye* that it'll have you looking for a Rareware logo, but the visuals are equally as striking. Never mind that it's an N64, never mind that the hardware is now over 4 years old, and never mind that the only three groups (Nintendo, Rare and Acclaim/Iguana) that could ever make this hardware do anything but lay there and die aren't behind it—it doesn't matter, as a virtual nobody like Eurocom has *easily* matched them all. One of the best N64 titles ever? You didn't hear it from me...





Needless to say *TWINE* **crushes** the framey mess that was *Perfect Dark*—if James saw Joanna walking around some Monte Carlo casino, he'd probably stick out his foot while sipping a martini at the baccarat table, and trip the ugly chick. While I'll stop short in saying it's better than *Turok 3*, I will say that if you were head over heels in love with *GoldenEye* there is **no** question that this game needs to be in your collection—just tell the bank loan officer that GameFan sent you.

REVIEW	ECM: I'M M, ECM...	DEVELOPER - EUROCOM PUBLISHER - EA	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 94

ECM likes being angry. Why else would he bother reading (and worse, responding to) the various postings on video-game newsgroups?


"The Biggest, Baddest RPG to ever hit the N64!"
- IGN64
Ogre Battle 64™
Person of Lordly Caliber
Knight of the Calginous Order
"I'm terribly sorry, sir. When I arrived, he was already..."
Go find him... now!"
Supportive Attack
Leia
"If you wanted to know, I liberated Natashkan."
Over 50 Hours of non-linear gameplay on one of the largest N64 carts ever
Fight epic battles while commanding over 50 types of characters
Experience an epic storyline worthy of the Ogre Battle name
IGN.COM BEST OF E3 AWARD
TEEN
Mild Animated Violence
Mild Language
NINTENDO64
RPG/SIM
ATLUS
www.atlus.com
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New York Times Bestseller

What you're looking at, my strategy RPG-loving brethren, is the single most expertly localized game in the history of RPG localizations. I have never played any type of RPG, traditional, strategy, or action that has been this well translated, this expertly written. No broken sentences, no meandering plot, no half-assed writers destroying a story that was masterfully crafted in the first place. No, this is a game that begs to be read! You won't be reaching for the text speed-up button to race to the next battle; you won't wince when, in the midst of an incredibly dramatic conversation, some inane witticism rears its ugly head; and best of all, no stilted, reader unfriendly sentences. *Ogre Battle 64* is a shining example as to how an RPG should be localized. Atlus should offer classes to the fine folks at Sony's localization dept. (<cough>, *Legend of Dragoon*, <hack>) on just what it takes to make a game a novel-like experience... oh, and the game's pretty good too.

Ogre Battle 64

Person of Lordly Caliber

Ogre Battle: Episode...VI?!

Ogre Battle 64 is actually Episode VI in this classic series that's spanned the SNES, PlayStation (albeit as ports of two of the earlier SNES/SuFami titles), Saturn (ditto), Neo Geo Pocket Color (argh) and N64 with *OB64*. It seems that, initially, the fellas over at Quest decided to keep the *OB* games in random order yet have one unifying story behind them. Unfortunately, I won't be able to tell you what that story is since so many different people have laid their hands on the series over the years that they've hopelessly mangled any real sense of even a tenuous continuity (at least in the US). Which is fine, because generally speaking I don't play strategy RPGs for the story.

No, normally I head to the options, crank the text speed up to eyelid flaying and hold down the speed up button with the utmost disregard for friends, family, and small household pets—if I could I'd simply dispense with the story altogether... it'd certainly make experiences like *Front Mission 3* more bearable.

In the case of *OB64*, though, I was racing through the battles to catch more of the storyline—a storyline that makes the jumbled, confusing, headache-inducing (as far as keeping track of the plot lines goes) world of *FF Tactics* look primitive in comparison (though it's still my fav game in the genre, mind you). The lads at Atlus—Yu Namba and Yasu Asakura on translation duty and the über-editing skills of Colin Totman—should be commended for delivering such an incredibly enticing, ultimately readable adventure. That's certainly something that doesn't happen much these days, as anyone that's the veteran of more than two or three RPGs can easily tell you.

However, there's one thing I'm not gonna tell you: what the story is actually about. I want you to go experience that on your own, unfettered so that nothing's ruined, colored, or otherwise tainted before you get your hot little hands on it. You can thank me later.







R REVIEW	ECM: ECM LIKE, YES.	DEVELOPER - QUEST PUBLISHER - ATLUS	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE ANY DAY NOW...	VIEWPOINT SCORE: 96

Toy Soldiers

Unlike games like *Final Fantasy Tactics, Shining Force* and *Front Mission, OB64* is not a unit-by-unit strategy game—rather you control units on the squad level. As you march across the lushly colored maps, individual teams comprised of up to five units: archers, warriors, heroes, giants, etc. As you engage enemy forces in close combat, the battle screen comes up and both parties face-off against one another head-to-head. Then the standard RPG battles kick in, though again, you have no direct control over the individuals in a squad. They'll kick, poke, stab and magic their way to victory with only the most cursory input on your part (such as "attack most powerful," "attack leader," etc.)—control freaks need not apply, as at times it can get very frustrating when your party simply won't just "attack leader" and end a skirmish quickly; particularly if you're low on health and are in tight quarters.

That's essentially the game. What? Doesn't sound fun? Oh believe me, it is! You'll travel from hot-spot to hot-spot putting down insurrections, curbing evildoers, forging alliances (and gaining new troops in the process) and generally making life merry for the innocents residing in each town—if you've got a big-time hero-complex (like me) you're gonna be in strategy heaven. And speaking of towns, you can enter them and get a feel for what they think of your, um, occupation: Sometimes they love ya, others, well, they don't love ya—at all.

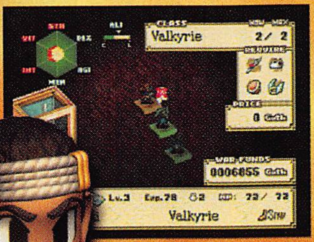
One note: This game is definitely geared more towards the strategy fan than today's typical RPG fan, so make no mistake going in and expecting the teenage, 90210 antics of the last few Square releases (up to and including *Chrono Cross*).

















An Ogre Sans Warts

The story's great, the gameplay is fun, but how are the graphics and other aesthetic issues? Actually they're wonderful, thank you very much. The entire game is completely 2D, with rendered sprites and decent magical attacks. Everything is lushly colored and once again begs the question: "why aren't there more 2D games on this console?" <sigh>. If you're a graphics tart looking for massive, streamed FMV spell effects, a neat-o 3D map and enough CG rendered backdrops to bankrupt a 3rd world nation, well, move along 'cause this game ain't for you... Eggo.

The only real complaint with the graphics is that as individual soldiers in your units level-up into different classes, they don't get a new set of duds in the process. You can probably chalk that up to the limitations of the cartridge format ("My kingdom for a megabit!")—though it **is** cool when you end a map with some dead peeps in your party... let's just say they're auditioning for roles in the next Capcom survival horror title.

The music is reminiscent of the glorious days of *Final Fantasy Tactics*, though they're not quite as stunning. The tunes will, however, get thee in the mood to smite the rampaging hordes with steel and spell... verily.







Going Out In Style

While there's no question that the N64 is winding down in terms of number of titles released, it does the ol' heart good to see that games like this can actually succeed (and spectacularly) on the platform. It's really too bad more RPGs didn't make their way to the N64, but there's always hope: After all, the GameCube has done away with their biggest impediment—cartridges.

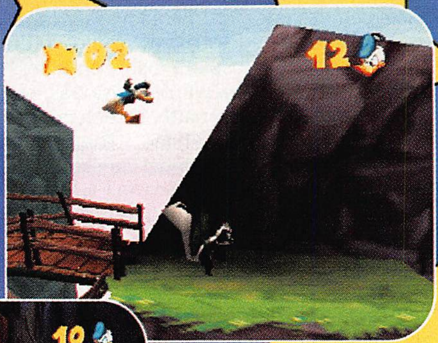
So strap on your sword, learn some magic and take a trip to what may just be Atlus' best US-release ever: It's the first novel-in-a-game and it shouldn't be missed by any RPG fan, whether he or she watches a lot of *Charmed.*

Each month ECM battles the ogres of the 'front office', but after offerings of fishheads and Twinkies, their fury abates.

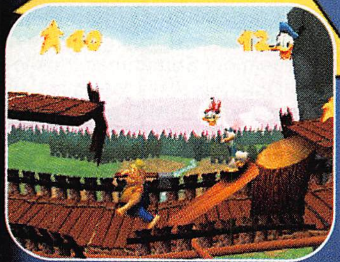


Disney's

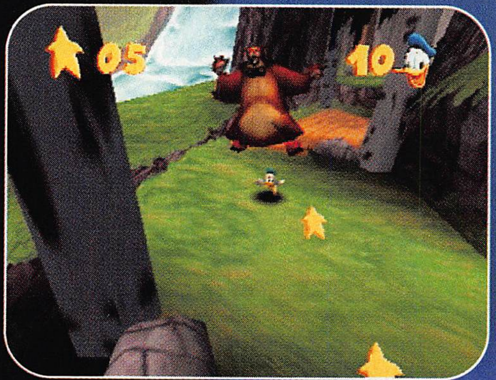
"DONALD" @#DUCK?*!







Keeping track of the Disney license is a feat in and of itself. Recently, it seems the licensing agreement for the Magical Kingdom has been split into four companies: Rare/Nintendo, Eidos, Square and of course Ubi Soft. Sadly, figuring out the particulars of these different arrangements is like making sense of our own Government... you just know it's never going to happen. (Speaking of which—Vice President Leiberman?!... the confusion mounts.) But what is clear though, by taking in account the most current crop of Disney titles, is who's got the better end of the deal. Eidos was lucky to feature the actual Disney theme park in their cart racer; *Magical Racing Tour*, but got dogged on the celebrity of the characters who starred in it. Nintendo on the other hand, taking due role as developer behemoth, has landed the more notable cast for its own cart game, *Mickey's Speedway*, including the most distinguished members of Walt's drawing board family. Which leaves us with good ole Ubi Soft, the company best known for the *Rayman* license. That's right, the French publisher who most recently dropped the **horrific** *Dinosaur* onto an unsuspecting gaming public must, at all costs, repent for its sins. Luckily, instead of delivering another standard Kart game, we actually get something a bit more original—a classic styled platformer starring none other than Donald Duck.



Running on a version of the *Rayman 2* engine, *Donald Duck* borrows from the 2.5D-style gameplay of titles like *Crash* (which was obviously the main inspiration), *Yoshi's Story* and *Kirby 64*. While the game is obviously a tried-and-true kids' game, fans of platformers will surely find themselves drawn to *DD*'s basic (and kinetic... thanks ECM) play mechanics. Things like double jumping as you narrowly land atop moving structures, and scenarios where Donald must rush toward the screen as a rampaging Briar Bear looks to indulge in a bit of roasted duck. And all along, Donald keeps his patented anger flurry close in check. Indeed, getting nailed by an enemy is not tolerable to the speech-challenged duck, and once struck, he busts out into a gray cloud of smoke and flailing fists. But seeing as the game's difficulty is more suited for...well, me, the baddies are conveniently scattered and truthfully, offer very little challenge.

Visually, *DD* doesn't quite look as good as his ill-jointed brethren *Rayman*. Donald himself looks nice, but the detail in the levels definitely needs a bit more tweaking. Seeing as how the control and level set up appears pretty much complete, Ubi still has plenty of time to add to the background designs and solidify the frame rate. These additions should help the game resemble a bit more of the quality gamers expect from the *Rayman* engine.



So will Ubi's Donald Duck platformer be enough to make up for those poor children who purchased *Dinosaur*? Sure, they may not have been subjected to Pokémon-esque seizures, but the memory of the anti-*Land Before Time* will haunt them long into their teenage years. So to the parents, save that money on therapy and instead, let your children take part in the care-free platforming bliss of Donald "Thank god it's not another kart racer" Duck. **F**









P PREVIEW	FURY: THE FOLLOWING IS NOT A CART RACER...SO ENJOY!!!	DEVELOPER - DISNEY INT.	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - UBI SOFT	AVAILABLE NOV

Sin and Punishment

Treasure evokes nothing but the highest respect at GameFan; the gameplay geniuses excel at delivering fast-paced action that's unique and intense... Bashing their games around here is akin to being logical on an Internet message board: only good for making sure all insults are handily channeled in your direction. With that in mind, witness as I try to keep myself from coming off as a drooling Treasure fanboy while delivering the scoop on their new action-shooter, the super sweet looking *Sin and Punishment*... seems I've failed already. *C'est la vie...*







S&P seems to do what Treasure does best: combine mechanics from different genres into one, to produce a stew of gaming goodness perfectly executed. This time elements have been inspired by a diverse range of games; the aborted *Gun Beat* (3D forward-scrolling, a countdown timer), *Panzer Dragoon* (heavenly seizure ensues as *S&P*'s lock-on mechanism and track-based shooting causes me to reminisce of my days literally living *PD Zwei*), and *Final Fight* (blasting enemies isn't enough, you also get to pummel them hand to hand if they slip through).

Some last tidbits to get those saliva glands going: The action is shrouded within a dark anime-style storyline that calls for huge boss battles and more than 25 characters on-screen at the same time! Even a grown man, er, teen deserves a good drool every now and again—Fury, pass that bib around, the whole office is gonna need it! L







1 Player	Developer - Treasure	LAGI: Why is Treasure punished with poor sales
Available TBA	Publisher - Nintendo	when their games are so criminally good?

PREVIEW



Mickey's Speedway





There are two things that you can count on with the N64. One is that you will always have 3D platformers and adventure fare to toil away all those Nofriendo hours. The other is that when you do manage to get together some friends, you can play kart games.

The cart racing genre has a long, respectable lineage on Nintendo consoles, and *Mickey's Speedway* is another impressive installment. With *Mickey's*, Rare wanted to take parts of both *Mario Kart* and *Diddy Kong Racing* and combine them into an even better racing experience. The end result would be a vast improvement not in the graphics or engine, but a "better" AI and play mechanic that would enhance the multiplayer.

Mickey's Speedway will be what Rare hopes is the perfect gameplay balance for inexperienced players and kart vets. By making more powerful weapons available to those that are constantly losing, giving them an opportunity to make up lost ground during races, they will help give the newbies a competitive edge. These will not be outright gifts, though, considering players will still need to collect them and race competently. Ultimately, the best racer will still win but some upsets could be in the making. On the flip side, no wierd rubberbanding will be implemented to keep races close by default.

There will be 6 playable characters, off the bat, including Mickey, Donald and Minnie. Each has strengths and weaknesses in four categories: acceleration, handling, speed and strength. In addition to the three main circuits to race, expect at least four combat maps and some hidden goodies to make playing through a must. More experienced players will also be rewarded with some cool secrets once they master all the courses.

The only weak spot that there seems to be are the weapons. Little in the way of variety, imagination or weapon effects are included, as of now. This will exact some kind of toll on the excitement factor. There is still time to see the inclusion of some more cool weapons, like the rain cloud or bi-plane, though. J





1-4 Players	Developer - Rare	The Judge: Forget *Marvel vs. Capcom*;
Available Nov	Publisher - Nintendo	where's my *Disney vs. Warner Bros.*?

PREVIEW







And here they are! At long last Gameboy Advanced is unveiled! At the most recent Space World, Nintendo blew the roof off Dolphin, which is now GameCube, and GBA. Both machines look pretty damn cool, too. One of the first games will, of course, be a Mario Kart title. Look at these screens; this is a portable machine people. Not too shabby. I guess SNK did the right thing. If they couldn't compete against a hand held that was considerably inferior, what chance would they have had against this puppy? Expect all of that Mario Kart goodness in the palm of your hand. I don't suppose there is any chance we will get a Metal Slug 3 for this machine? A man can dream...

Mario Kart Advance

Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo

There have been some attempts at RPGs on the GBC, but they have all sucked (yes, ALL of them have sucked). Let's face it, the GBC is just too small to handle it. With the GBA though, we will see some pretty cool little RPGs that you can play anywhere; even math class. Will it be deep enough to satiate RPG fans? That has yet to be seen, but *Golden Sun* sure looks great!





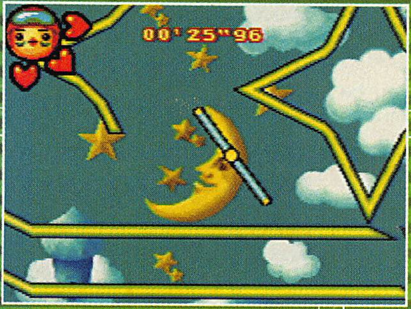


Golden Sun

Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo

Put this in the "So Wierd It Might Actually Be Worth Playing" section. I guess with a name like *Kuru Kuru Kuru Rin*, we shouldn't have expected anything less. Remember that PlayStation game, *Irritating Stick*? Well, if you were one of the dozens of people who actually liked that game, then this one is right up your alley. Excuse me while I go bounce my head off a wall.







Kuru Kuru Kuru Rin

Developer
Nintendo
Publisher
Nintendo


THE DARK KNIGHTS TOYED WITH THEIR BLOODY
TROPHIES BEFORE DISCARDING THEM LIKE THE REST
Become empowered with deadly magical spells.
Vanquish your enemies with seven powerful Heroes.
Battle in a Special RPG DeathMatch mode.
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE
War of Heroes
www.godgames.com
PHANTAGRAM
kuf.godgames.com

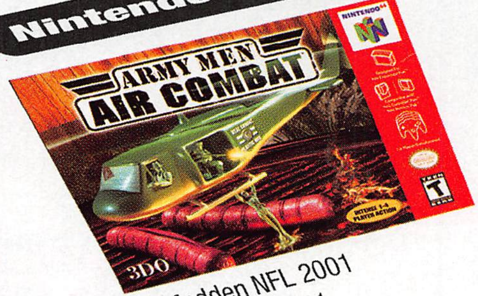
Dreamcast [DC]



- deSPIRIA [Import]
- WWF Royal Rumble
- NFL 2K1
- Star Wars Episode 1: Jedi Power Battles
- Sakura Wars 2 [Import]

COMING SOON
- Quake 3 Arena 10/10/00
- NBA 2K1 10/31/00
- Sonic Adventure 2 [Import] 11/15/00
- The Grinch 11/07/00
- Street Fighter II X [Import] 11/22/00

Nintendo 64



- Madden NFL 2001
- NFL Blitz 2001
- Pokemon Puzzle League
- Donkey Kong 64 Collector's Edition Yellow Game Pack
- Spiderman

COMING SOON
- Crusin' Exotica 10/18/00
- Banjo Tooie 11/20/00
- Hercules 11/21/00
- Pokemon Stadium Gold/Silver [Import] 12/15/00
- Legend of Zelda: Majora Mask 10/26/00

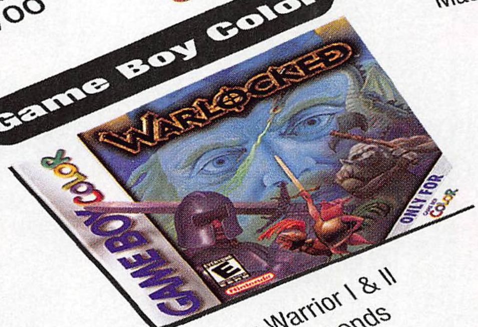
PlayStation [PSX]



- Chrono Cross
- Dino Crisis 2 [Import]
- Metal Slug X [Import]
- Final Fantasy IX [Import]
- Madden NFL 2001

COMING SOON
- HBO Boxing 10/11/00
- Kamurai [Import] 11/05/00
- NBA Live 2001 10/17/00
- Rockman X 5 [Import] 11/05/00
- Evil Dead: Hail To The King 10/30/00

Game Boy Color



- Dragon Warrior I & II
- Gauntlet Legends
- Perfect Dark
- Sakura Wars GB [Import]
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire

COMING SOON
- Sabrina The Teenage Witch 10/20/00
- Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 11/15/00
- Pokemon Gold 10/15/00
- Pokemon Silver 10/15/00
- MTV Sports TJ L[...] Ultimate BMX 10/23/0[...]

PlayStation 2 [PS2]



- Gun Griffon Blaze [Import]
- Ring Of Red [Import]
- Shin Sangoku Musou [Import]
- Wild Wild Racing [Import]
- XFIRE - Cross Fire [Import]

COMING SOON
- Final Fantasy X [Import] 3/20/01
- Madden NFL 2001 10/20/00
- Onimusha [Import] 11/15/00
- Silent Scope 10/24/00
- Street Fighter EX3 10/26/00



GameFan Sports

Madden 2001 — PlayStation 2 — EA Sports

We were wondering if all *Madden* needed to once again feel fresh and exciting was a 128-bit facelift. Question answered. With amazing attention to user records and on field nuance, *Madden 2001* a is phenomenal football title and maybe the best PS2 game at launch.

G 10 | C 9 | P 9 | M 7 | O 7 | **94**



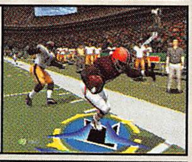
Madden owns *NFL 2K1* in the graphics dept., and the play calling screen camera keeps you feeling 'in the game,' but I have issues with the collision detection, some of the play mechanics, and the feeble commentary. This is a first generation title and it shows.

G 9 | C 9 | P 7 | M 6 | O 7 | **88**

NFL 2K1 — Dreamcast — Sega Sports

Visual Concepts has done it again. Add a franchise mode and internet play and you have the best next gen football title... again. While Madden bests *2K1* in graphics and stats, the commentary and overall presentation of *2K1* gives it the edge.

G 10 | C 9 | P 9 | M 8 | O 7 | **96**



Okay, so *Madden* PS2 wins the graphics and interface war this year, but *NFL 2K1* has EA bested in all other areas that count. Thanks, I'll take gameplay over graphics anyday—maximum passing is now complemented with a balanced running game and life is good!

G 8 | C 10 | P 10 | M 8 | O 6 | **97**

Virtua Athlete — Dreamcast — Sega Sports

Sega's answer to *ITF*, *Virtua Athlete* is an arcade title that gets little augmentation on the home system. What does that mean? It means the game is incredibly shallow and is a poor choice for purchase. Rent this one during the Olympic broadcasts.

G 8 | C 8 | P 7 | M 5 | O 5 | **72**



Well, let's see, I've seen this before, and I've seen it better—and that was 2 years ago! *International Track & Field* is more solid, deeper, and more enjoyable than this, and I wouldn't buy ***that***! Maybe worth a rental, just to see how *IT&F* would look on DC.

G 8 | C 8 | P 8 | M 6 | O 4 | **77**

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX — PlayStation — Acclaim

This may be my choice for PlayStation game of the year. Despite the annoyance factor of no free look and some tough non-trick controls, Mirra is so fun and so overflowing with replay value that you will play it until your thumbs bleed (I did).

G 8 | C 9 | P 10 | M 9 | O 7 | **96**



Tony Hawk killer? Indeed! Not only does it kill *THPS2*, it even one-ups the original with a slightly better trick interface (modifiers rock) and a solid, 'I can't believe this is the *Thrasher* engine' design. Needless to say, there's a new king in town.

G 8 | C 9 | P 9 | M 8 | O 7 | **94**

Jikkyou World Soccer 2000 — PlayStation 2 — SCEA

Okay, good news, bad news here. Konami's *Jikkyou* is known for the rock-solid gameplay and the moniker 'Better than *FIFA*', but graphically, this is the most disappointing PS2 game to date, with mind-numbing slowdown, crippling the game.

G 7 | C 8 | P 7 | M 6 | O 5 | **75**



Kodomo is jaded and Konami has upgraded the best 'footy' game for PS2 with bells and whistles in tow. Sure, the framerate is a bit boggy, but gameplay wise, it's still the king. It might cause you to pray to all things Konami, but it definitely kicks.

G 6 | C 7 | P 6 | M 7 | O 5 | **86**

The scores say it all: This month I got to play some really kick ass games. While *Madden* and *2K1* were the games I has jonesing for all summer, it was a little game entitled *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX* that kept me playing the longest. This is the worst Sega Thumb I have had in quite awhile. Better than *Tony Hawk* or *Tony Hawk 2* is all I have to say. I just know I will get letters for rating *NFL 2K1* higher than *Madden*, but this is a battle of inches. *Madden* had some weak commentary and a less friendly presentation and that is what separates the two. *El Niño*



Virtua Athlete

R Review

Developer: Agetec
Publisher: Sega

Available: Now
\# of Players: 1-4

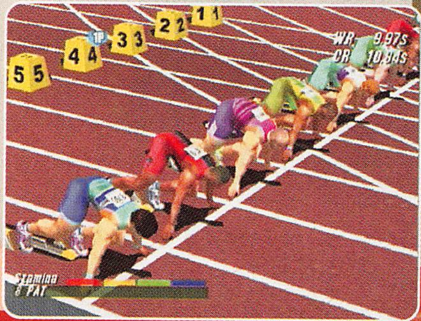
Why Agetec is releasing this game instead of Sega of America is beyond me, but whatever. As long as we are getting more arcade sports titles, I am not complaining. Once again we are given a Sega arcade title to play on the home console, and I am sure you will all be relieved to hear it has nothing in common with WSB2K1.

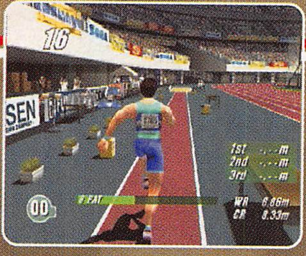
Virtua Athlete is Sega's answer to *International Track & Field*. A button mashing, carpal tunnel inducing tizzy of a game. Only problem is that it is way too short and is extremely shallow. Being that it is designed to be a quarter cruncher, you have no extensive tournament mode or extra options to keep you playing. Like *IT&F*, this game will be interesting for about twenty minutes in one player mode. Each tourney takes about 8 minutes to complete and you will be getting course records in short time (I was breaking the records my second time through).

The only saving grace is the multiplayer function and the ability to create and customize your own athletes. Choose nationality, face, outfit and preferred events to differentiate you guy from the others. Save him to your memory card and track his stats. You can even upload your stats to the website and see how you rank against other players in the country. No SegaNet play though, sorry.

Playing with your buddies obviously is much more preferable to going at it alone since you can constantly push each other to better scores. Much trash talking will ensue. True pain is reached, however, at the end of every tourney when you are forced to sit through the credits... ack!

While *Virtua Athlete* will keep you occupied for a time, the shallow gameplay will relegate this to a rental for anyone that is not a psycho. **EN**







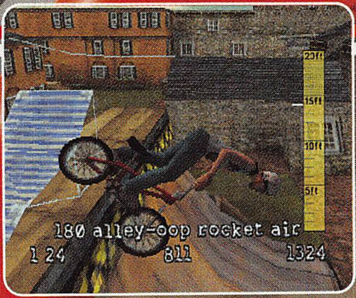


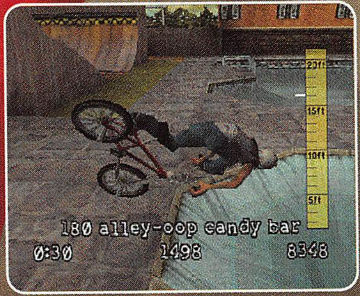
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX

PlayStation

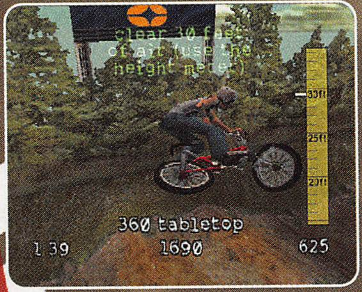
Developer: Z-Axis
Publisher: Acclaim
Available: Now
of Players: 1-2

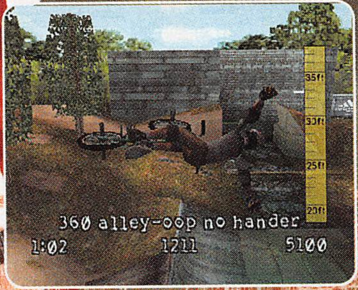
R Review











Skateboarding and BMX games are not new, but with the release, and subsequent success, of *Tony Hawk Pro Skater*, this genre (and yes, both are part of the same genre) has seen a renaissance. I can tell you right now, that while *Tony Hawk* stands out as the best of the skateboarding titles, *Mirra* will be very tough to topple as best bike game. *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX* is nothing short of marvelous. I find it remarkable that this game is powered by the same engine used by *Thrasher*, a wholly unremarkable skateboarding game.

While the game features two player modes, freestyle biking and trick sessions, the heart of the game lies in the Proquest. Proquest is Mirra's career mode, where you take a BMXer and try and turn him from a no-name amateur into a sponsored pro. You do this by completing a series of tasks set at the beginning of each skate park. Each park has 3 sets of challenges: amateur, pro, and hardcore (or three that I have found. I have admittedly not been able to get past the hardcore as of yet). Challenges range from trying to amass trick point, accomplishing tasks like rail sliding objects, and besting records like longest rail slide, biggest air and most hard core trick.

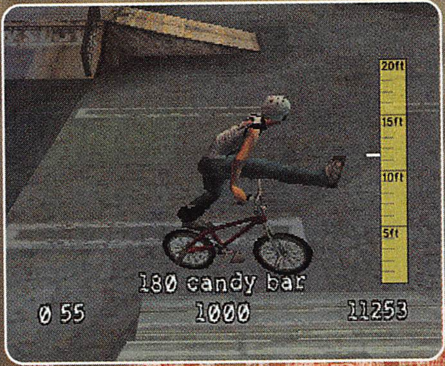
When you complete all of the objectives for one of the sets of challenges, you are awarded with new gear, bikes and opened skate parks. While the gear is little more than some snappy new duds to adorn yourself with (and to hide all of the scabs), bikes will enhance your abilities and the parks, obviously, give you somewhere new to tear it up.

"I find it remarkable that this game is powered by the same engine used by Thrasher..."

The big questions that all gamers have are "How does the trick mechanism work?" and "Is it any good?" Well, as to whether or not it is a good trick system, let me just say that only Mr. Hawk's game is in the same ballpark. *Mirra* not only allows for some very versatile maneuvers, but is also very intuitive. As long as you have some skills, you will be pulling off some seriously gnarly combos and freestyle moves, in no time.

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX is the best Acclaim game of the year; and this is a year that includes the release of *Turok 3*. I can only hope that *Mirra* gets the same kind of attention and revenue that *THPS* has been garnering. Now where the hell is my Dreamcast version? **EN**





Madden 2001

PS2

Developer: EA
Publisher: EA
Available: Oct 26
of Players: 1-8

R Review

Oh, how I have waited for this game to finally come. *Madden* has always been a good game, but had grown stagnant despite its efforts. You can only do so much on the PlayStation and *Madden* had hit that plateau years ago. A questionable PlayStation 2 line-up was in dire need of AAA quality games. *Madden* is one of those few.

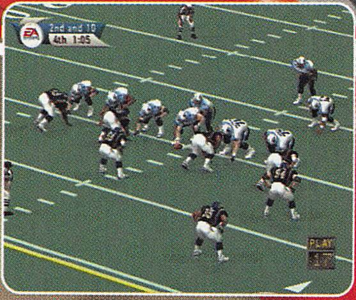
This is going to sound a bit bizarre, if not hypocritical, after complaining that the PlayStation versions were getting stale, but what makes this *Madden* so cool is the fact that it retains all of the familiar aspects of the franchise, from control to options, with the addition of better sound and insane graphics. Bluntly put, there is almost nothing new that can be injected into any sports genre, so docking this title for not offering some new, earth-shattering gameplay element would be unfair. All there is left for developers to do is take what they have and refine it or enhance it. Madden had the gameplay; what it needed was a facelift.

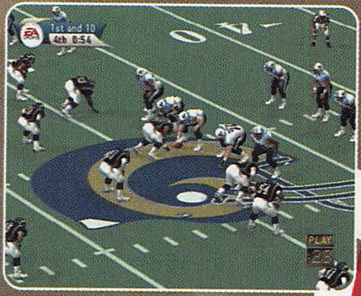
And what a facelift it got. *Madden 2001* may be the best looking of the launch titles. The player models are exquisite; the animation is extensive; and presentation has never been better. Every aspect of the game scintillates, with the exception of one: commentary. While the sound effects and overall ambiance is a step up, the commentary seems little better than past PSX versions. This is a stark contrast to the exemplary commentary that is offered in *NFL2K1*.

> ***"...what a facelift it got. The player models are exquisite, the animation is extensive, and presentation has never been better..."***

As mentioned prior, all of the options and great gameplay are intact. *Madden* is a familiar and comfortable fit. They did, however, add Madden Cards to make playing more interesting. Now, as you play, you will earn Madden Cards for accomplishing certain feats. With these cards you will be able to unlock secret modes, teams and options. Now there is a reason to play the game solo.

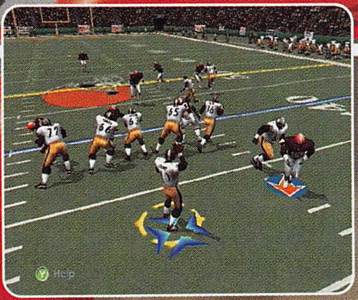
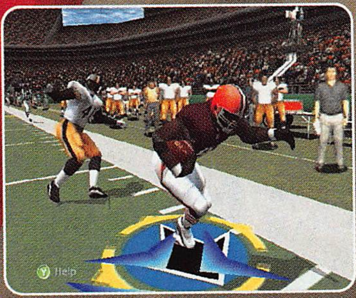
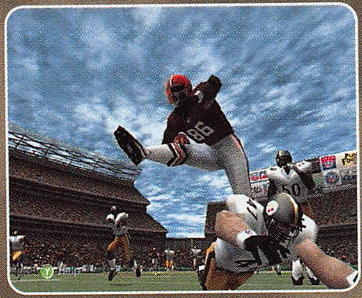
Madden 2001 is a kick ass football sim and an absolute must for anyone willing to shell out the bucks for a PS2, at launch. I am now looking ahead... to hockey. **EN**

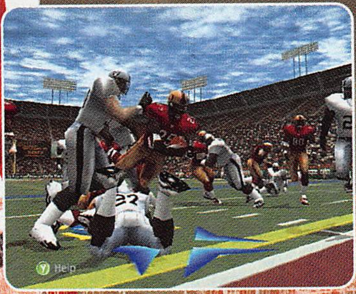





NFL 2K1



Dreamcast

Dev.: Visual Concepts **Available: Sep 5**
Publisher: Sega **# of Players: 1-8**

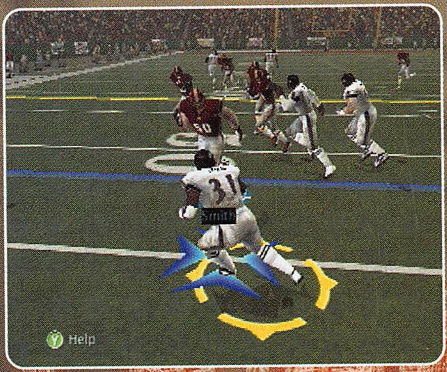
R Review

It's hard to publicly admit flaws about a project you've worked so hard and so closed to... Thankfully, while publicly Visual Concepts asserted that *NFL 2K* was the best thing since Fury's Prelude, internally they seem to have acknowledged that the game wasn't the be-all-end-all of football titles (just like deep down inside, Fury knows there's a better 30k ride out there). The result of this knowledge and a year of development (those hard working guys at VC started work on *NFL 2K1* as soon as *NFL 2K* shipped) has yielded what is the best football game to date.

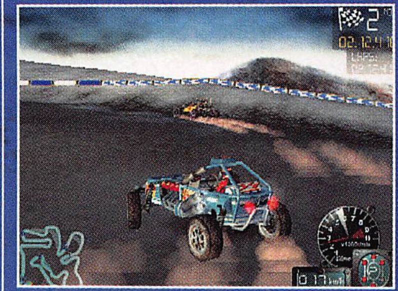
The proof is most definitely in the gameplay—*NFL 2K1* takes the best elements of *NFL 2K* (the maximum passing system and the precise control), leaves the crap behind on last year's disk, and brings in brand new elements to make for an incredibly enjoyable experience. So what's been changed? First things first: speed, it has been increased incredibly, but not just increased, also balanced. That means that— unlike last year where the defensive pursuit would overwhelm even the fastest runner—this year things have been tweaked so that you can actually hit and make it through the running lanes. Other changes made allow for a solid two-player running game, including a brand new juke move for a much better chance of breaking tackles and making plays after the first bit of contact. Passing is also a lot better since motion-plays are now well implemented and the defense plays a real zone (requiring more reads on the passing routes).

Of course, the much-hyped addition to *NFL 2K1* is online connectivity for multi-player gaming cross-country style. Logging on and setting up a game is relatively painless, but the experience that awaits you isn't lagless online gaming like Sega is touting. Nope, *NFL 2K1* plays noticeably slower and the slight delay requires you to complete change up your way of playing; I was struggling to adjust for my first couple of games. Ahem, a broadband option would have cut the lag that much more, but Sega isn't going to deliver the American ethernet adapter until Christmas, at the earliest (and even then it won't be compatible with *NFL 2K1*), so GameFan's T1 is safe for Fury and Kodomo to respectively continue downloading disgusting Consumption Junction clips and Asian/CosPlay images.

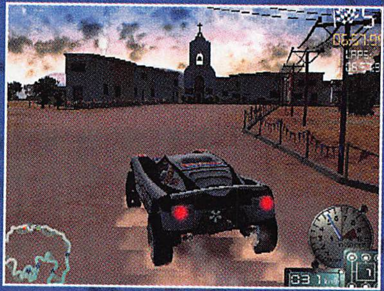
With a franchise mode, downloadable roster updates, online play to tool with, and the best gameplay in town, *NFL 2K1* is going to keep your hands happily glued to the Dreamcast pad for a long time to come. Bottom-line, *Madden* wins the graphics and interface battle but *NFL 2K1* comes out on top in every other aspect that matters... Now where's my chain gang and NCAA version; I want college football on Dreamcast and I want it now! **Lagi**

Wild Wild Racing







Originally planned to be finished for the Japanese PlayStation 2 launch, Rage's *Wild Wild Racing* is going to be out for the November European launch instead. Keeping the game in development for longer has clearly paid off, judging by these brand new shots.

Interestingly, much of game's framework and early code was done in Japan at Imagineer's offices. A few members from Rage's UK offices left for Japan so they could start working on PS2 devkits sooner than the rest of the European developers. Work, however, is now being done at Rage's main studio which is located in Liverpool. As off-road racing is name of the game, Rage has ensured that the physics model will accurately simulate the interaction between the buggy and slippery tarmac. This is reflected in the controls, which won't be quite as arcadey as one would think, but having the player immerse himself in the rewarding control method is what Rage wants... This will only work if the game itself is interesting.

Three main modes of play make up the bulk of Wild Wild Racing. These are Quest, Skill and Stunt. The first of these, Quest, has the player driving around a set path and collecting letters that makeup a sentence as fast as possible. Skill is an offbeat showcase of the physics engine as the player pushes around a big ball and negotiates it around obstacles. The last mode of play is Stunt which takes place on short courses that are made difficult to negotiate due to hair-pin turns and jumps.



A sign of a launch-title is perhaps visible in *Wild Wild Racing*'s meager amount of tracks, of which there are only five. Expect more info on *Wild Wild Racing* after ECTS, where Rage will unveil the game alongside a few GBA projects as well..

Wipeout Fusion

New shots of *Wipeout Fusion* have surfaced and the game will be playable at the ECTS show in London alongside Sony's Cambridge Studio's title *Dropship*. Currently none of SCEE's games will ship this year with *Formula One 2000* slipping to an early 2001 release and thus changing its name to *Formula One 2001*.





A few notable changes are being made into the series, to keep the formula fresh (so to speak). First up, a variety of characters are available for selection and the tracks will have many more shortcuts than before, with parts of the tracks getting destroyed as the race progresses.

Stuntman

As discussed a few issues back, Reflections' secret PlayStation 2 title is indeed a car game and more information has leaked out about *Stuntman*... as the name implies, the gameplay consists of making dare-devil stunts. 10 different vehicles (at least) will be available as will several different locations where you get to film your stunts. I'd bet that we'll see an incarnation of *Driver* on the PlayStation 2 using the *Stuntman* engine.

Have you noticed how many stunt and racing games are coming out for the PS2 and XBox? The added CPU power is getting every developer jiggy with the physics engines and stuff.

ECTS fever..

Activision, EA, Eidos and Sega are all skipping ECTS in favour of separate events; some are just plain skipping it. Despite that, brand new titles from Codemasters, Nintendo and Sony should make the show worthwhile. Konami will be showing brand-new *Metal Gear Solid 2* footage that will hopefully make ECM shut up and take notice. Even better, the first playable version of *ZOE* will be available and Konami will unveil a brand new PlayStation 2 title. Codemasters, having just released the excellent *World Touring Cars*, will be showing their upcoming PlayStation 2 titles and Nintendo will be holding a special news conference regarding the Game Boy Advance and Dolphin. September is a good time to be a gamer!

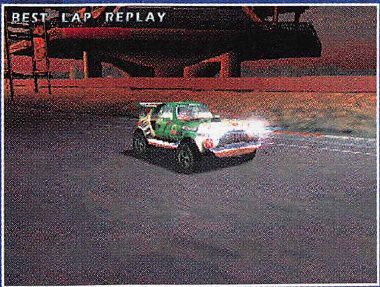
PlayStation 2 titles will make up the bulk of the games on show but one very interesting title for the

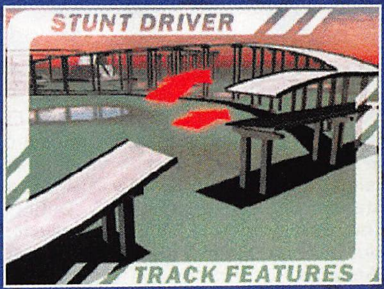
current PlayStation which will debut at the show is *C12* from Psygnosis. Very little is known of the title, which is believed to be a shooter in the vein of *MDK* but in more open enviroments.

Last but not least we just got confirmation that the Bitmap Brothers have signed their upcoming RTS sequel *Z2* to EON Digital Entertainment, which is headed by ex-Activision Europe CEO John Burns. *Z2* ain't a console title but I just had to mention this since it's been such a much-anticipated title and it is likely headed towards a next-gen console; it has nothing to with our love towards anything Bitmap Brothers related... (certainly not *Magic Pockets*)

Climax

Chances are, over the years you've played quite a few games by developer Climax without ever realizing it. We are not talking about the Japanese Climax Studios either (responsible for *Super Runabout* and *Climax Landers*) but of the British Climax founded in 1988 by its current CEO Karl Jeffrey.





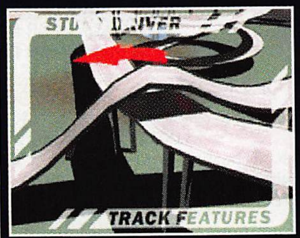
During much of its existence, Climax has worked on countless conversions for such publishers as Konami, Acclaim, Midway, Sega and Electronic Arts, it has slowly shifted its focus towards producing original games. During the past year, Climax has been announcing both new titles and development studios with such speed, you'd think another Scavenger was in the making. While Climax has yet to prove its capabilities in producing original Triple A titles, it's resources and, above all, experience are not to be scoffed at.

The company has three development studios in the UK located at Fareham, Nottingham and Brighton. The latter is headed by industry veteran Tony Beckwith who used to be at Probe before Acclaim stepped in. The studio is specializing in vehicle dynamics (Ain't all developers into that these days?? Just keep giving me *Ridge Racer* physics) and Bezier patch technology, which basically allows the use of curved surfaces. This technology will be evident in two upcoming titles, *Stunt Driver* and boxing-game *Title Defense*. Just before ECTS, the studio announced it's developing another racing game, *Mille Miglia*, for the PlayStation 2, to be published by Sci, who obviously want to cater to not only the bloodthirsty *Carmageddon* fans but to actual racing fans, too.

Not content with console games, Climax has dedicated a team producing games utilizing WAP Cellphones, an as of yet untapped market that everybody wants a piece of. Finally, a very interesting project is *Warhammer Online* for the PC community. Considering how well-established and popular the *Warhammer* series, it has taken a considerable amount of time for someone to come up with an online version.

STUNT DRIVER

Interview with Climax CEO Karl Jeffrey



GameFan: Climax has mainly done conversion tasks in the past, why the recent change to start developing plenty of original games?
Karl Jeffrey: Historically, Climax has done a lot of conversions and this allowed us to build up large financial reserves and expertise developing for all major platforms, with relatively low risk and has put us in the strong position we are today. Now we are using those resources to start working on more original and self-financed projects (like *Symphony of Light*, *Stunt Driver*, *Title Defense* and *Warhammer on-line*). At the moment we have 14 games in development and only one of them (*Premier League/Bundesleague Stars* for PSX) is a conversion. Most of our games are based on licensed properties, though, as this helps them stand out from the crowd and create awareness among our target market.

GF: Considering you've worked for all the publishers out there, does the help when you pitch an original project for the publishers?
KJ: Publishers know that we deliver quality products on time and to budget so yes, our reputation among publishers can only help when we pitch an original project to them. Publishing titles represents a major potential risk in terms of the financial investment for all parties involved. However, the close relationship we have with several major publishers and the quality titles we have delivered in the past does mean that they know that we are capable of delivering quality gaming experiences time after time.

GF: It looks like the next two big platforms will be the PS2 and Xbox. Do you think that previous Sony developers might jump ship to work on Xbox since it's easier to get good results on it?
KJ: While I can't speak for other developers, there does seem to be a definite feeling within the development community that PS2 is a bit tricky to get good results from. However, we feel that the PlayStation 2 is an amazing machine, a real joy for experienced hard-core PSX coders yet a real nightmare for lazy PC programmers! Climax falls in the first grouping and as such we are finding the machine a joy to work with, we see the fact that many of our competitors are having terrible problems with the machine as an added bonus. However, we are also going to be dedicating a lot of our resources to X-Box development and we are big believers in Microsoft's plans for their platform.

GF: During the past year, several publishers and developers are getting into cellular game development utilizing WAP, how does the cellular revolution figure into Climax plans?
KJ: We see the cellular revolution and the emergence of WAP technology as a major development for our industry. The raw potential of being able to connect to the internet via a handheld device is something we are investigating closely for game development. We are currently establishing relationships with mobile phone service providers as well developing technologies to utilize this breakthrough in new and exciting ways.

GF: What's the premise behind *Stunt Driver*? It sounds similar to Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car Racer*.
KJ: *Stunt Driver* is an adrenaline-fueled, arcade racer that we are developing for next generation platforms. The premise is simple, in order for the players to come first, attain lap records and unlock bonuses, they must take major risks, jump the very highest ramps, jump the most suicidal of gaps while all the time battling against other battle-hardened racers.

While the game may sound similar to Crammond's title we have been more influenced by the crazy stunt scenes from films or early '80s TV series. Ski jumps, ramps moving up and down, launch pads and a whole slew of original gameplay modes make this a standout, fun game which we are all looking forward to ourselves!

GF: What are the advantages offered by the PS2 for a game such as *Stunt Driver*?
KJ: The sheer flexibility of the platform in allowing us to do pretty much what we want. The Emotion Engine is a superb piece of design by Sony and means we can implement some pretty complex AI and physics models that were not possible in the past. *Stunt Driver*'s complex physics model has been in development for some years now waiting for a platform powerful enough to arrive so we can finally use it.

Our in-game, dynamic track editor could not be implemented on 32-bit and 64-bit platforms due to the sheer complexity of the beast. PS2 has allowed us to fully implement this function that will add serious longevity to the game.

Japan Now!

Spaceworld 2000 came and went, but not without leaving a massive impact on the face of gaming. Hopes ran high for the elusive 'Dolphin' to finally be seen and Nintendo did not disappoint. Dubbed the "Nintendo GameCube," the 128-bit system will debut in **July 2001 in Japan** and **October 2001 in America**. Unfortunately, Nintendo has formally announced that **the first playable GameCube software will be at E3 2001**. Still, the tech demos showcasing Mario, Luigi, Link and Samus in action were more than enough to get the adrenaline going, despite a firm statement that the demos were **not** in fact games: "These images are provided as examples of the type of graphics you may see on NINTENDO GAMECUBE." Still, if Nintendo can only deliver half of what they promise with the GameCube, you'll see one of the most powerful, easy-to-develop-for consoles, unleashed in less than a year's time.

Of course, GameCube wasn't the only new toy in town and Nintendo has no plans to relinquish its stranglehold on the handheld market. Packing a processor that's more powerful than the SNES, the Game Boy Advance will definitely make a huge impact next year. If you can't get excited about playing old Game Boy games on the GBA's bigger screen, you need only remember five words: *"Mario Kart Advance* for launch."

NINTENDO GAMECUBE TECH SPECS

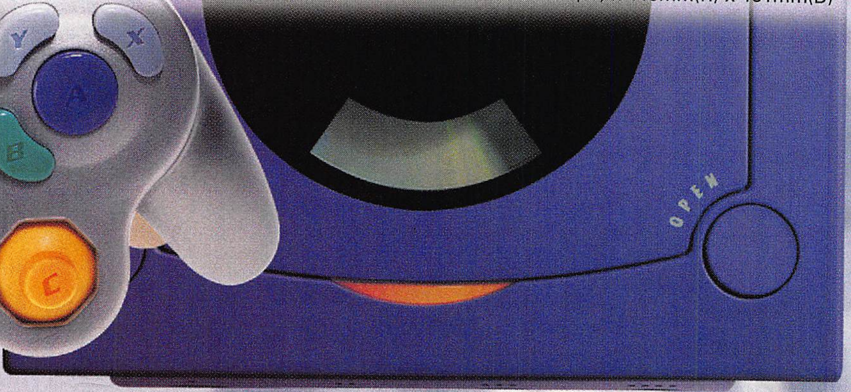
MPU("Microprocessor Unit")*	IBM Power PC "Gekko"
Manufacturing Process	0.18 microns Copper Wire Technology
Clock Frequency	405 MHz
CPU Capacity	925 Dmips (Dhrystone 2.1)
Internal Data Precision	32bit Integer & 64bit Floating-point
External Bus Bandwidth	1.6GB/second(Peak) (32bit address, 64bit data bus 202.5MHz)
Internal Cache	L1: Instruction 32KB, Data 32KB (8 way) L2: 256KB (2 way)
System LSI	"Flipper"
Manufacturing Process	0.18 microns NEC Embedded DRAM Process
Clock Frequency	202.5MHz
Embedded Frame Buffer	Approx. 2MB Sustainable Latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Embedded Texture Cache	Approx. 1MB Sustainable Latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Texture Read Bandwidth	12.8GB/second (Peak)
Main Memory Bandwidth	3.2GB/second (Peak)
Color, Z Buffer	Each is 24bits
Image Processing Function	Fog, Subpixel Anti-aliasing, HW Light x8, Alpha Blending, Virtual Texture Design, Multi-texture Mapping/Bump/Environment Mapping, MIPMAP, Bilinear Filtering, Real-time Texture Decompression (S3TC), etc.
Other	Real-time Decompression of Display List HW Motion Compensation Capability

*The Gekko MPU integrates the power PC CPU into a custom, game-centric chip.

(The following sound related functions are all incorporated into the System LSI)

Sound Processor	Special 16bit DSP
Instruction Memory	8KB RAM + 8KB ROM
Instruction Memory	8KB RAM + 8KB ROM
Data Memory	8KB RAM + 4KB ROM
Clock Frequency	101.25 MHz
Maximum Number of Simultaneously Produced Sounds	ADPCM: 64ch
Sampling Frequency	48KHz
System Floating-point Arithmetic Capability	13.0GFLOPS (Peak) (MPU, Geometry Engine, HW Lighting Total)
Actual Display Capability	6 million to 12 million polygons/second (Display capability assuming actual game with complexity model, texture, etc.)
System Main Memory	24MB Sustainable Latency : 10ns or lower (1T-SRAM)
A-Memory	16MB (100MHz DRAM)
Disc Drive	CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) System Average Access Time Data Transfer Speed 16Mbps to 25Mbps 128ms
Media	8cm NINTENDO GAMECUBE Disc based on Matsushita's Optical Disc Technology Approx. 1.5GB Capacity
Input/Output	Controller Port x4
	Digicard Slot x2
	Analog AV Output x1
	Digital AV Output x1
	High-Speed Serial Port x2
	High-speed Parallel Port x1
Power Supply	AC Adapter DC12V x 3.5A
Main Unit Dimensions	150mm(W) x 110mm(H) x 161mm(D)







Mario Kart Advance!!!



Mario Kart Advance!!!

GAME BOY ADVANCE TECH SPECS

Spec	Value
Screen	Reflective TFT Color LCD
Screen Size	40.8mm x 61.2mm
Resolution	240 x 160 dots
Display Capability	32,000 colors
CPU	32 bit RISC-CPU + 8 bit CISC-CPU
Memory	32 Kbyte WRAM + 96 Kbyte VRAM (in CPU)
	256 Kbyte WRAM (external of CPU)
Sound Speaker	Headphone Terminal
Communication Function	Multi-play by up to 4 people possible with
	Game Boy Advance Communication Cable
Power Supply	2 AA Alkaline Batteries or special Battery Pak
Battery Life	2 AA Alkaline Batteries: Approx. 15 hours
	Battery Pak: Approx. 10 hours
Power Consumption	Approx. 0.6W
Dimensions	82mm(L) x 144.5(W) x 24.5mm(D)
Main Unit Weight	Approx. 140 g
Game Pak	Max. of 256 Mbits (Game Boy Advance Only)
	Compatible with Game Boy/Game Boy Color
	and Game Boy Advance Game Paks
Forecasted Price	9800 yen (plus tax)
Estimated Date of Sale	March 2000 Worldwide

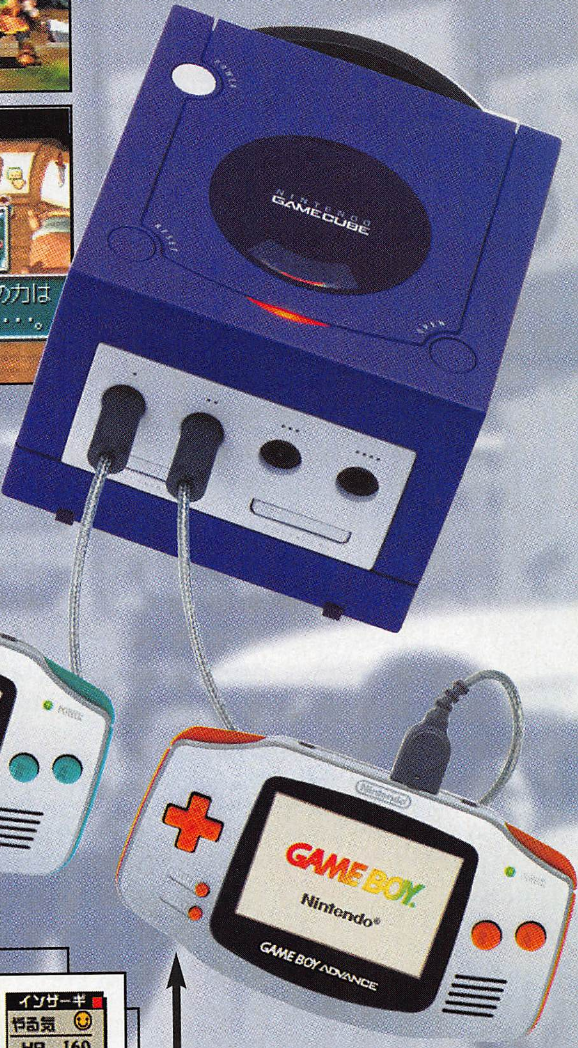




Get a load of the graphics in this RPG, *Golden Sun*!











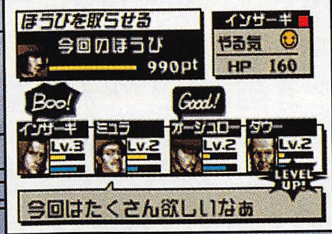
Kurukurukururin!?!



Napoleon!!







How linkable do you want it?

Imports

Reviews







マリオストーリー MARIO STORY

There's nothing worse than a tragic breakup. Meg Ryan & Dennis Quaid, Todd McFarlane & Marvel, or the notorious Nintendo & Square scandal of '97. For those too young to remember, it went something like this...

Nintendo comes home early from a hard day's work, promoting the N64, hangs his hat on the rack, and opens the bedroom door.
Nintendo: Honey? I'm hooo...? <gasp>
Square: <snatching her clothes up> Honey! Wh, what are you doing home so early?
Sony: <blushing> <scratches his head> Hey, it's not what you think.
Nintendo: H, how COULD you?! I thought we meant something! Wh, what are you doing?? Wh, what about the kids? *Final Fantasy III* and *Chrono Trigger*?
Square: I don't know why you're so shocked. You're so behind the times. Look at you! You're still wearing carts. And besides, Sony is **such** a better lover! Look at his big [marketing] muscles. How can I turn this down?

<Sigh> I remember it like it was only yesterday... back when RPGs were instant classics and loading times weren't a problem. While the initial offspring of Square and Sony's coupling never amounted to anything (*Tobal No. 1*), their second son grew up to be the highly successful *Final Fantasy VII*, the game which changed the way everybody viewed RPGs. But back before Sony entered its illicit relationship with Square, there were some great RPGs made like *Final Fantasy I, II,* and *III, Chrono Trigger, Secret of Mana, Breath of Fire,* and *Super Mario RPG*.

The latter was a classic Square RPG published by Nintendo starring characters from the Nintendo universe. Now, many, many years later, we're getting a sequel. Though Square isn't behind the controls on this one, it's still worth your time. First of all, the characters are 2D! ...sort of. Like Sony's *Parappa the Rapper*, Mario and company are paper-thin versions of their former selves (imagine them flattened by a cartoony mallet). This is especially evident when they 'turn' and you see them as thin as a pancake from the side. It's really unsettling at first to see sprite-like characters on the N64, a console which is rarely graced with the wonders of 2D. Environments are cartoony, polygonal, and rem-

















iniscent of a children's storybook. Not since *Legend of Mana* have I been this impressed with a game's storybook-like world.

The story itself is like that of your standard Mario game: Bowser has kidnapped the Princess, and it's up to our hero Mario to save her (How come Luigi never gets in on the action? Damn the Man! Brothers have feelings too, ya know!). If there's one thing that the original *Super Mario RPG* and this game do, it's remind you that that you're in the Nintendo universe. Other than main characters like Bowser, Peach and Yoshi, you'll see Koopas, shells, blocks, hammers, stars, the castle from *Super Mario World* and more... most within the first five minutes!

Mario Story's gameplay is much like *Super Mario RPG*. Anyone familiar with Square's turn-based formula for role-playing games will know what to expect. Options in battle include the ever-popular butt stomp, hammer attack, magic (via flower points), and retreat. Square fans will feel right at home with this familiar, if somewhat simplified, battle system.

One of the big knocks on *Mario RPG* was that it was too easy. Unfortunately, *Mario Story* looks no different. I haven't had a chance to finish the game yet (oh the woes of deadline), but it's been pretty uneventful so far. For those considering an import purchase, I'd suggest holding out for the domestic release two months later. *Paper Mario*, as this game will be called in the U.S., is scheduled to go on sale December 26th.



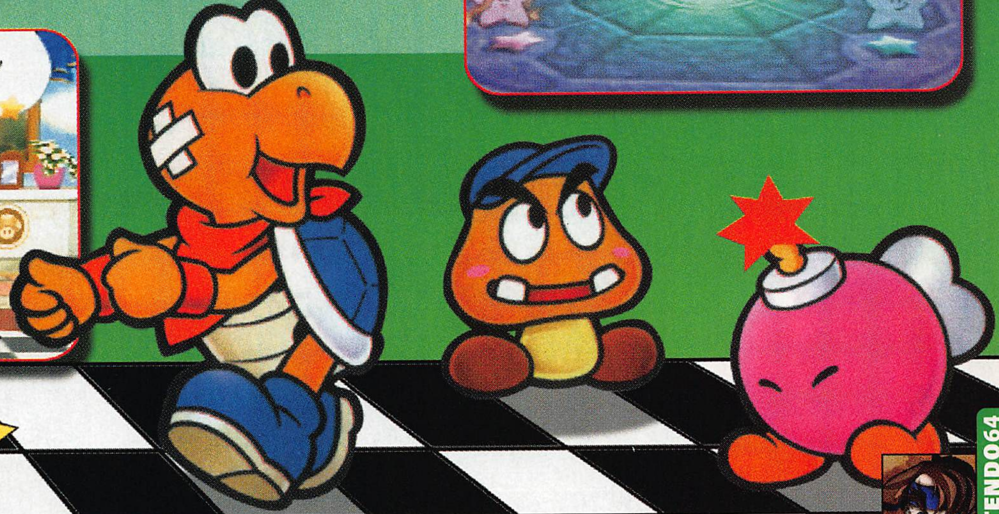




Eggo wants to do a documentary titled Luigi: The Untold Story.

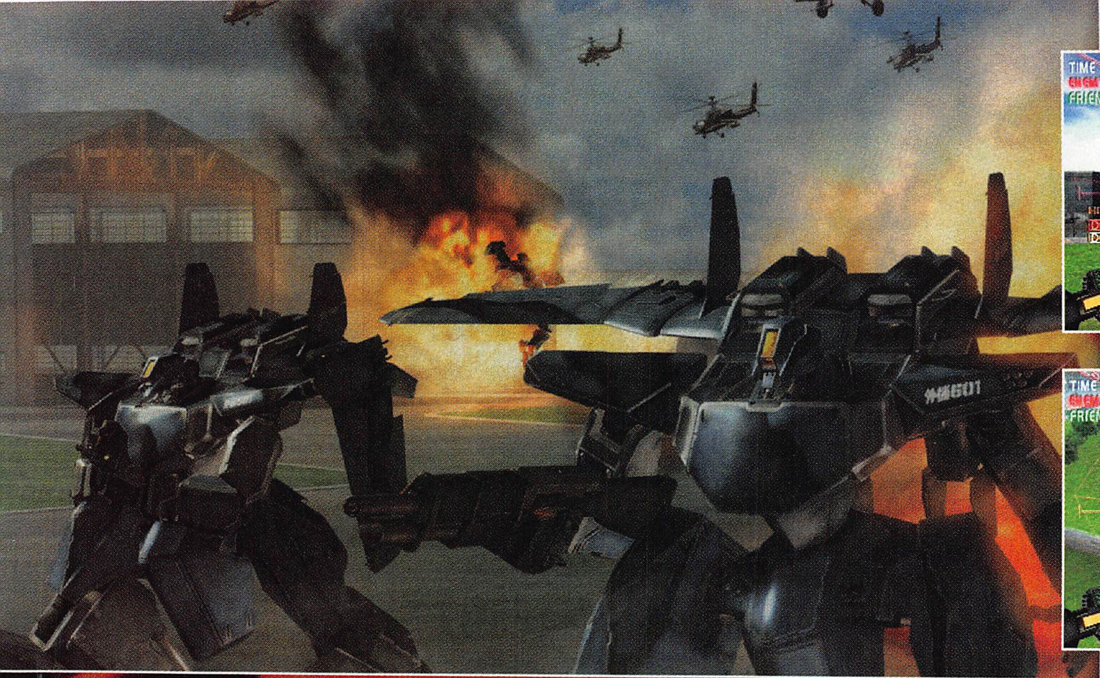






Viewpoint Score	Developer - Intelligent Systems	1 Player	Eggo: Look, Ma! No Square!
:87	Publisher - Nintendo	Available Now Japan	

REVIEW







Rumor: ECM is the shortest GameFan staffer ever, clocking in at just over 4 feet tall, yet possesses an incendiary, angry wit that topples men 3 feet taller than him.

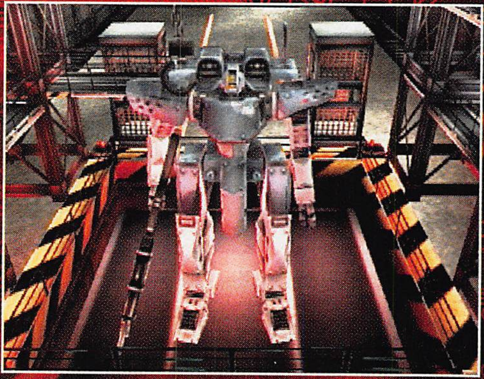
Fact: While it is true that he is a 'surly little man' and a testament to the collegiate system of Buffalo, he is actually just under average height. He's taller than Fury and Eggo, and only slightly shorter than myself. We all clock in between 5'5" and 5'9", not the tallest of chums, and this 'little man syndrome' has hurt us in profound ways. From the jaded Eggo, who seeks comfort in the clutches of *Diablo II*, to the stout Fury who eats to subside the shortness ("Dude, I eat because I'm fat and I'm fat because I eat, bro."). ECM throws himself at any shooter, thus temporarily engaging in a rampant tirade of "Me versus the masses." As for myself, well, is it any wonder that I jump at the chance to play any game that involves piloting a massive suit of armor and shooting everything in sight?

Well, for the second time in a month, I've been given the opportunity to do just that, now trading in *Armored Core 2* for GameArts' *Gun Griffon Blaze* (which Working Designs will soon bring stateside). On the surface they may seem quite similar (you piloting a Mech), but each has a different goal and handles things in a radically different manner. Given that I pretty much adored *AC2*, where does that leave *GGB*, then?

Where *AC2* is almost sim, allowing for customization down to the smallest minutia, *GGB* goes straight for the arcade variety. There is no option to change the paint scheme of the HI-Macs, nor anything beyond weapons and few added options in fact, but there really doesn't need to be. This is 'pick up and play' gaming and, for the short fun that it is, *GGB* actually performs quite well.

You'll basically only need to know 2 things to get maximum enjoyment out of *GGB*, namely, what a HI-Mac is and what it does. As for the former question, well, I hope you're familiar with the first *Robotech* series or the astounding works of Masamune Shirow. HI-Macs are hybrid Mechs and jet planes, thus yielding the *Robotech* Valkyrie Guardian mode and Shirow's GUGES armor from *Appleseed* comparisons. While you can't transform into anything, you can fly for short periods, thereby avoiding obstacles, be they enemy units or environmental objects. This is a nice twist on the genre, and actually allows you to use some strategy when attacking multiple enemies dug into an encampment.

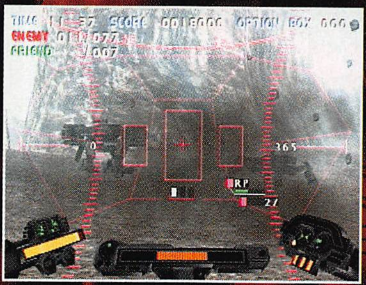
Second, the HI-Macs do one thing: destroy everything that they come across. Enemy mechs, tanks and helicopters (as well as buildings, bridges and a space











KODOMO: NAPOLEON WOULD'VE LOVED A MECH.	DEVELOPER - GAMEARTS PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	VIEWPOINT SCORE :83

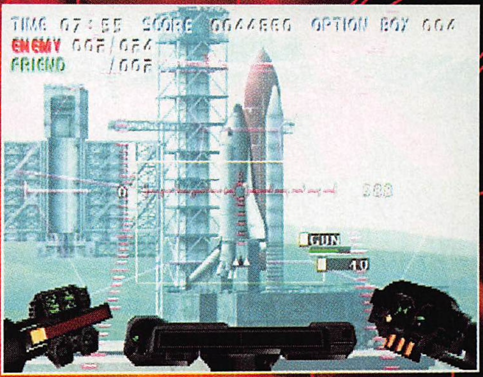
shuttle) are all ripe for the picking, and just begging to be destroyed. Some of the missions require you to destroy specific targets, but you'll also want to crush anything that you find, since they often yield repair canteens, ammo or points. Item crates will also appear frequently in each level (destroy errant rocks here and there to find a few hidden ones) and lead to weapons, attributes or armor. After each successful mission, you can pick a few crates from the stash you've acquired (depending on total points and experience), and get things like the Armor Piercing Rifle, Power Up Weapons or Advance Armor. If you want to come anywhere close to completing *GGB*, you'll wisely get and use these additions at key times in the game.

At the outset, there are but a scant 5 missions, but as you go along there are many secrets to unlock (be they more HI-Macs or levels), but don't expect much more depth than the cursory PS2 graphics produce. You are always confined to a relatively small area, which varies according to geographic location (such as the cavernous hills of Tibet or the relatively flat Cape Canaveral).

Thankfully, the standard control scheme goes hand in hand with the arcade gameplay and lone first-person view perspective. Using the classic first-person mode (moving with analog left and looking with analog right), navigating between, around or over enemies is quite easy. If you don't like to get up close, you can also use the zoom feature and lob bullets from a distance.

While most of the strategy elements of the Saturn version have been eliminated (save for massive ammo conservation on the Nightmare level), *GGB* still deserves a look for one reason. It's not the most intelligent or deepest game out there, but for some quick arcade action that will satiate the majority of gamers for a few weeks, it definitely delivers.

Kodomo forgot to mention that the entire art department is between 5'10" and 6'1" (though Editorial's the clear leader in the width department).















ガングリフォン ブレイズ

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特撮冒険活劇 スーパーヒーロー烈伝

Super Hero Retsuden







A lot of you write in thanking us for covering really odd, really weird and completely obscure imports—and hey, most of the time we're happy to give them to you. Sometimes, though, we should probably leave well enough alone. Case in point: Banpresto's newest DC title, *Super Hero Retsuden*, offers up all the cool, super-cheesy rubber-suited madness that you could ever want, but is there actually a game in here? Do Kamen Rider and Ultra 7 feel embarrassed when they hang out with the other fruity Japanese heroes down at the local watering hole? They should...

When we first got word about *SHR* we were about as excited as can be: a side-scrolling, 2D beat-'em-up starring the 'best' of Japanese rubber suit super heroes fighting it out against a host of the cheesiest rubber monsters you've ever seen—Godzilla's got nothing on these guys. And wouldn't you be excited? After all, when was the last time you actually played a good, solid beat-'em-up? *Spike Out* in arcades (if you possessed the luck of the Irish and actually stumbled across one)? Needless to say, we were falling over one another for first go at it. Turns out we shoulda sat down and kept playing (i.e. banging our heads against) *X-Squad*... but nooooo, we have to be 'hardcore,' and sometimes hardcore just doesn't pay.

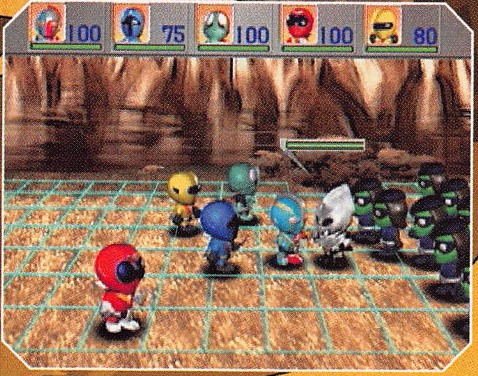
Anybody remember the Great Battle games? Well this is the same basic idea... except, well, it's bad; really, really bad. Picture this: you pick one of three superheroes to start: Kamen Rider, Ultra 7, and some other guy that I can't even be bothered to translate (I won't even saddle Kodomo with that pain). Then you outfit them with various health power-ups and such, and then it's off to what's supposed to (I'd gather) be the fun part, the beat 'em up sequences—this is where things get very ugly.

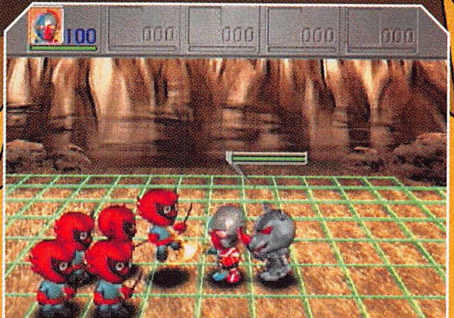


Now if I'm developing a really cool, 2D side-scrolling brawler, I've got some cool characters (OK, they've got those), some cool moves (um...), and some overall rippin' play mechanics (ahahahahaha): sadly, *SHR* lacks two of those three important categories. See, everyone has the same basic set of punch and kick moves with little to no variation, and even fewer combos. Secondly, you can only move in the cardinal directions: up, down, left, right—there is **no** diagonal movement in this game. To make matters worse, whenever you move through the levels you're almost always walking on a grid! See the screens on this page? You're always standing on an overlayed grid whenever you control the characters... like we need a bright green reminder that we can only travel in four directions. The worst thing about all of this? I tried to convince myself that it was actually good for about three hours... that's what you get for trying (and I mean **really** trying) to give a game a fair shake.

Needless to say, unless you need absolutely every game starring the Power Rangers in your collection (oh yes, they're in here) or have a masochistic streak that says you should buy this over, say, a good Dreamcast game, you'd better pass on this. And unlike the forthcoming *Bangai-O* there's zero chance of ever seeing this over here—see, sometimes we are spared some really bad games... too bad nobody told the guys that published *I-Spy* that.

While ECM's all for the rights of the short and squat, sometimes even he needs somebody to pick on.









REVIEW	Developer - Banpresto	1 Player	Viewpoint Score
ECM: Go, go, Power Ran—never mind. Go, go, straight into the garbage.	Publisher - Banpresto	Available Now Japan	45

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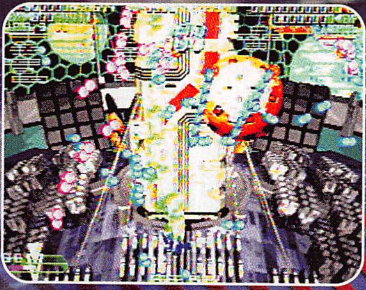
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shooter alley

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood?

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MARS MATRIX



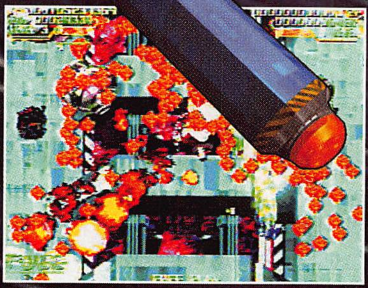
Field of Screams

Now I've played more than my fair share of shooters with more bullets than there are drops of water in the ocean—heck, it's even the norm nowadays. Well, *Mars Matrix* has more bullets than *atoms* in the ocean—**a lot** more. Oh sure, *ESPrade* had a lot of bullets; *DoDonPachi* had a lot of bullets; and heck, *Batsugun* had enough bullets to supply the LAPD for the next three decades of 'law' enforcement: "Sure he was unarmed… but man, I got to unload three full clips!" Apparently, though, the bullets from all those games decided to take a nice vacation on sunny Mars; to get away for while and take in the sights—unfortunately for you, it was all at the same time.

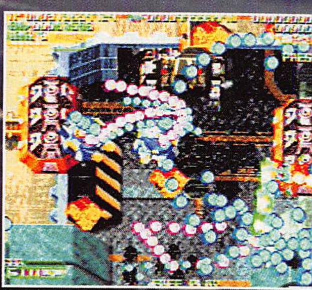
Needless to say, you'll be swimming through a sea of death. By level 3, there'll be a collision box worth of room between waves of bullets, and you'll have to deftly maneuver either the Mosquito 1 or Mosquito 2 like greased lightning if you want to escape utter and complete destruction (leading to another quarter down the slot).

If you're new to shooters this is **not** the game for you. If your idea of an intense shooter is *Space Invaders* this is **not** the game for you. If you answer to the name Weaksauce, Fury or Dead Meat (heya Hi-Fi!) this is **not** the game for you. But (and it's a very big but) if you like your shooters mean, hard, and way, way over-the-top on the bullet quotient, it's time to check into Hotel Hell…





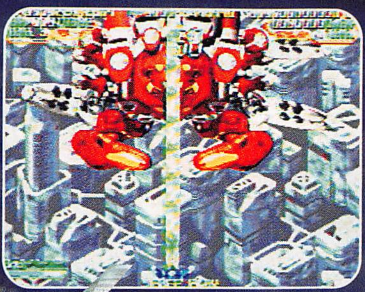






R REVIEW	ECM: Pass the ammunition!	Developer - Takumi Publisher - Capcom	1-2 Players Available Now	Viewpoint Score: 79





CPS-2: The Hardware That Wouldn't Die

While Capcom has been ever-so-slowly winding down development on its best hardware platform of all time (no, not the Saturn), they still find room to publish a shmup every now and again on CPS-2. First with *Giga Wing* then *Dimahoo* and now *Mars Matrix*. Oh, and as a brief aside: If I see one more person write that *Gunbird 2* is a CPS-2 title I'm going to go on a mad rampage targeted directly at Usenet posters that like to spread misinformation like I spread mirth and cheer.





An Intense Experience

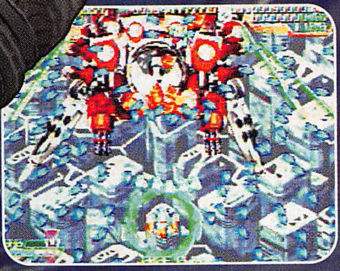
But even though things seemed to be decidedly stacked against gamers everywhere, all is not lost. Once you take your pick of one of two attack craft (the Mosquito 1 and Mosquito 2), you'll embark on a sprite-fest of epic proportions. However, there are a few twists:

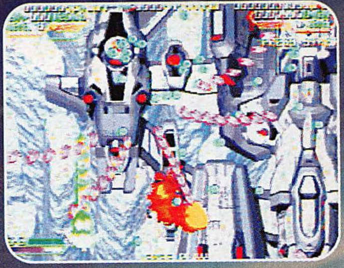
Like *Giga Wing*, *MM* gives you access to a weapon that enables the Mosquitos to capture enemy shots and fling them back at them, destroying them in a much more rapid, "You want some too?" *Aliens*-like frenzy. In addition to killing them faster, you also release more experience point 'thingees': by gathering enough your ship will 'level up' and your guns will become that much more powerful in the process. This throws a very nice wrinkle in the gameplay and is something that's decidedly different and not overdone in shooters by any stretch of the imagination.

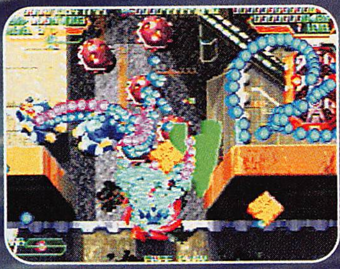
So everything sounds great, right? Fast action, super-difficult gameplay, and some nice twists to the old power-up formula. Should be a rockin' good time, eh? Well, there is one *small* problem.

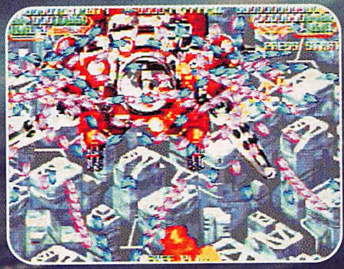
What's the Catch?

Ok, the big problem with *Mars Matrix* is that once you 'get it,' it's over. Oh sure, it seems virtually impossible at first: Fury wet himself the first time he played it and Eggo couldn't even clear level one, but after playing it for a couple of days, once you get down the ol' reflect laser (just like Giga Wing), this game becomes almost sedate. Sure, the screen is still clogged with bullets and it **is** much harder than *GW* ever was, but like *GW* the reflect laser knocks the challenge down a great deal. After that, with the edge gone, the thrill kinda goes with it. Games with a similar number of bullets on screen at once generally don't suffer from this malady even after extended play: *Batsugun* will still make you beg for your mommy even after years of playing it. And with this the game degrades, rapidly, into the super high score, pinball machine mentality of *Giga Wing*.

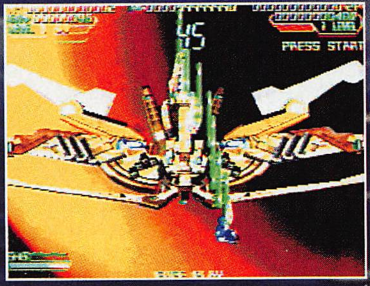












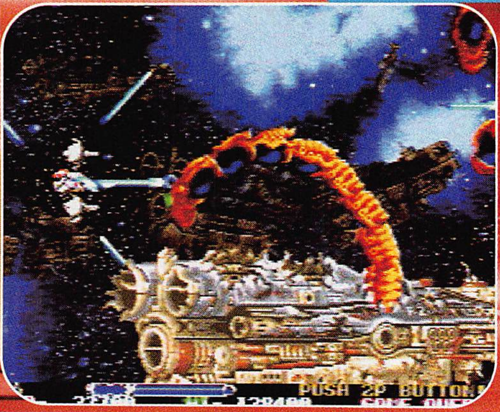
Still, it's fun for a while, but even I won't be running out to pick up the CPS-2 A board for my home collection. In the end, Takumi's made progress since *GW*, but just not quite as much as I would have liked. However, at least Capcom is still giving us these types of games, with *1944* coming next. And both are more than likely coming home to Dreamcast in the semi-near future... hopefully not via Capcom's online service like *Vampire Chronicles*... argh.

ECM can never seem to finish an article, preferring to write 17 pages simultaneously, a word or two at a time.

shooter alley

I'm a Gambling Man

If there was one shmup (shoot-'em-up for those of you just now tuning in) that I'd wager nearly every single person—hard-core or not—has played, I'd put all my money, my car (such as it is) and my reputation (err, such as that is, <wince>) on *R-Type*—those of you that haven't played it, well, put that banjo away and come down from the hills and join the rest of us on planet Earth. OK, now that the recluses have joined us, let's get moving...

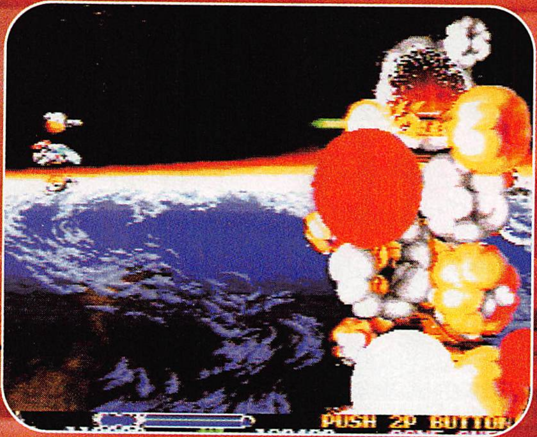


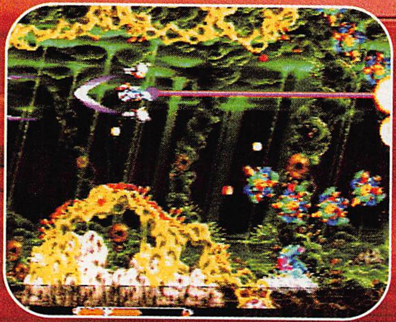


R-Type 101

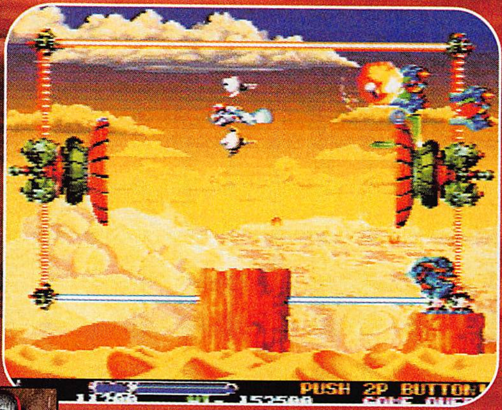
R-Type <DANGER: HISTORY LESSON AHEAD> was the brainchild of one of the more prolific arcade developers of the early to mid-'80s. You might remember their work in the arcade and NES classic, *Legend of Kage* (and no, it's not pronounced 'cage')... and maybe not. Either way, you **must** remember *R-Type*: It starred two of the single most impressive

R·TYPE LEO™









boss encounters ever—the rat-thing at the end of level 1 and the flying battle-ship of ultimate death in level 3. It also featured (to that point) the most impressive set of pick-up and bolt-on weapons the gaming world had ever seen. The infamous orb attachment, which flew forth at the merest button press, was completely indestructible—unlike your ship... silly engineers—and not only enhanced an already formidable arsenal of 'reflect' and 'ring' lasers, but also made mince-meat of any foe that was careless enough to get caught in its relentless wake. Between the crazy, off-the-wall weapons and the sphere of justice, an instant classic was born. There was only one problem...

I Give You... Memorization?!

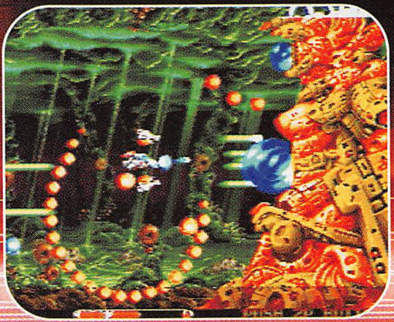
See, *R-Type* not only redefined the shmup as noted, but it also went ahead and created a sub-genre of sorts: whereas earlier shooters generally relied more on how rapidly your feeble synapses could fire your weaponry, *RT* invented the 'thinking man's shooter.' Yeah, I know, you'd think thinking and shmups would go together like Fury and skill but somehow Irem pulled it off... and I wasn't a happy little camper.



R REVIEW	ECM: Type R+	Developer - Irem Publisher - Irem	1-2 Players Available Now Japan	Viewpoint Score :80









Yes, that's right, I didn't really like *RT*. All right, actually I *did* like it for a while—or at least for as long as I didn't know any better. On the surface it was a wonderful specimen featuring everything anyone **should** look for in a shoot-'em-up: It was agonizingly difficult, it had blazing, eye-spanking graphics and a rippin' power-up scheme. However, while an intensely hard experience is generally welcomed with open arms by yours truly, *RT*'s 'thinking man style' really turned me off in the long run.

The problem was that RT was not really beatable based on plain old mongoose-like reflexes—no sir! What you had to do in *RT* was *memorize* every level, every nuance, every nook and cranny to come out victorious. No longer could a player wade into a particularly hot, gamer-destroying firefight and walk away with even a single, meager life left—you earned every single inch you traveled across the screen the hard way: quarter by 'look ma, I'm broke' quarter.

Now I'm not against some pattern memorization in games in general. Sometimes it has to be done (anybody else remember any of the bike sequences in *Battletoads*? <faint>) but typically only for very short spans. Unfortunately *RT*, beyond the 1st stage, was more a test of your memory than a test of your reflexes—and as we all know, reflex-based shooters are king, right?



The Black Sheep of the Family

And so it went through myriad sequels: the arcade-bred *R-Type 2*, the SNES-spawned *Super R-Type* and *R-Type 3*, even the most recently released game in the series (after Irem's break from the sad world of pachinko manufacturing—hey, everybody's gotta pay the bills), *R-Type Delta* featured the same basic gameplay. Ah, but there is one member of this dynasty that spoke to the rest of us: the adrenaline junkies.

R-Type Leo

While you're not gonna find this one at your local arcade (it was never released outside of Japan), the more intrepid souls out there have snagged import JAMMA boards to see what all the hubbub was about.were rewarded with something that looked like *R-Type*, felt like *R-Type*, but was decidedly different. First off, gone was the good ol' orb strapped to the front of your ship, supplanted by two super-powered bits that not only fired *à la* 'classic' *RT*, but also, in a pinch could be called on to perform a super-deadly 'smart bomb' style attack.



Instead of operating like a bomb, however, they'd home in on whatever the closest enemy happened to be, and proceed to worry them to death. Naturally, this all-powerful weapon is only useable in short bursts and adds a slightly strategic element to the game since it's not as if you can waltz through the game crushing everything in your path with them.

Beyond that, *RTL* definitely doesn't require as much level memorization as the rest of the family: The base is decidedly more of the *Thunder Force* school of horizontal shooter design, with more action and less thinking as the order of the day—though level 4 does hark back to 'old school' *RT*, so don't fret if that's what you're looking for—you'll get some, just not as much as you're used to.



Alone in the Dark

And so this lone oddity strode through the arcade universe, not making many friends in the process. In fact, it woud be one of the last *RT* titles till the release of *RT Delta* in fairly recent years (which actually did well enough that Agetec *might* consider doing another... if Irem gives them the option). For those of you that crave a little extra excitement in your *RT* adventures, your game is here... assuming you're willing to go through the obvious pain of obtaining the import-only board (or you could take the easy way out... stripling).

ECM isn't sure what his blood type is, but we're pretty confident that it's Type O... Double Negative.

Ristar

GRAVEYARD

Making Magic

Has there ever been a game company that has actually managed to replicate the delicate and precise alchemical process required to generate a corporate mascot on the scale of Mario, Sonic and Crash, the Triumvirate of gaming icons? Has a company ever been, at will, able to conjure through marketing hype, stunning graphics and intricate design, a force as potent as these three worldwide superstars?

Nope.

Sure, sure, you could try and make some frail argument that Link or Pikachu are as renowned as Mario, worldwide, but you'd be mistaken (even my Dad knows who Mario is, but ask him about Pikachu and his response is "God bless you!"). On Sony's front, Spyro? Solid Snake? Lara Croft? Nah, she's as much pop icon as video game icon—more along the lines of a Superman than a Crash or Mario—someone not instantly identifiable with games (ask the Judge and he'll say "I've heard of Sid and Marty... but Lara?"). And then there's Sega... the one company in the world that seemingly searched and searched (in vain) for a successor to Sonic's speed, good looks, and overall marketability and managed to fail, spectacularly, time and time again on the 16-bit battlefield.

A Graveyard of Another Sort

Sega's Genesis is literally riddled with the corpses of aborted attempts at re-creating Sonic's magic, flare, his savoir faire, even—to no avail. Which is not to say there haven't been some amazingly admirable attempts at titles that could compete, gameplay and graphically with Sonic, if not marketability-wise. Which brings us to this month's corpses, fresh from the mausoleum: Sega's *Ristar* and Blue Sky's *Vectorman*...

A Shooting Star

They say the brightest stars burn out the fastest. A truer statement probably couldn't be uttered of *Ristar*, one of the greatest games to ever see the light of day on Sega's most favored son, Genesis.

And why not? After all, prior to even Sonic's stoic arrival there were rumors flying of a mascot capable of grabbing things with long, stretchy arms... or ears, as the old story goes. Rumor has it, in fact, that *Ristar* (or some odd precursor) may have been the original Genesis standard bearer, and *Sonic* only came along after a crafty programmer at Sega of Japan figured out how to make the system go "real fast," and thus "blast processing" was born...

In any event, Ristar's debut was put off for about 4 years, at which point he kind of appeared out of nowhere on Sega's release schedule. Oh sure, there were a few print ads and some glowing reviews, but as with so many other branding opportunities the Sega of old mishandled, Ristar simply slid by the wayside to join others of his forgotten ilk: notable among them, *Dynamite Headdy* and the insipid *Greendog*, of which Sega's former president, Tom Kalinske was rather disappointed didn't fare better despite a much bigger push than *Headdy* and *Ristar* combined—guess Tom never played it... <hack>.















Gaming From the Heavens... Literally

There's one sequence on level 2-2, where you'll have to deftly hop from bubble to bubble to reach a one-up that's just beyond even Ristar's considerable grasp. Naturally, as you alight on each bubble, it begins to pop, and you'll have to nimble skip from bubble to buble, double-time, to reach the rogue life. This simple sequence (and many others) brought tears to my jaded eyes: classic gameplay coupled to precise control and eye-pleasing visuals... and people wonder why I get so mired in the past sometimes... <wistful sigh>.

Other sequences feature Ristar spinning round and round, prior to heaving himself into space, requiring rapid movement and just the right amount of finesse to coerce Ristar into narrow nooks and dark crannies, as he rockets along at Sonic-smashing velocities. It's truly a sight to behold as he careens around the screen like a rogue pinball, bouncing, juking and sailing to a perfect landing upon a precipice far above the lower playfields. This naturally leads to a nice, steady adrenaline rush, and hey, we all like adrenaline, right?











When You Wish Upon Ristar

Visually, *Ristar* shines brighter than brightest star in the midnight sky. Genesis color palette be damned, this game is a stunner. Bright, pastel hues; wickedly animated sprites; layer upon layer upon layer of achingly smooth parallax whipping by in the backgrounds; it's truly a spectacle, and was one more reason that, visually, the console could *easily* hold its own with the supposedly more powerful SNES—let's see, flexible CPU, or hardwired graphics routines... I'll take choice A, thank you very much.

Waiting For a Star to Fall

Needless to say, *Ristar* had the right stuff... too bad Sega didn't invest enough marketing in pushing the little guy into superstar (ow... that was completely unintentional) status. Sadly, he's little more than a footnote in gaming history now, but you should be able to score a copy ASAP via eBay or even your local retailer (I think they made about 200,000 copies and most of them are still new in shrink wrap). Now, if only we could get a new rev on Dreamcast... **ECM**









"...needless to say, Ristar had the right stuff..."













I Need A Hero

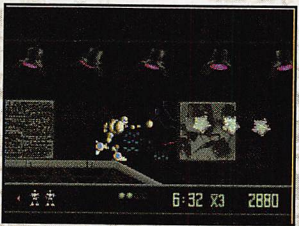
As the Genesis began to gradually wind down, and Sonic had finally run his course (about 3,000,000 miles later), Sega looked far and wide for a new hero to take some of the burden off of the shin-splinted, haggard hedgehog moving into the future. They found their hero in the form of someone different; someone about 180° away from Sonic's infamous 'tude, and flashy anthropomorphic design. His name? *Vectorman.*

"It was staggeringly playable and stunningly beautiful—a worthy successor to Sonic if there ever was."

History Repeats

History, as they say, is the greatest teacher, and those that ignore it do so at their own peril (wave to the nice people, Sony). With *Vectorman*, however, Sega made a valiant effort to bring him to the masses as their 'next generation' mascot—a slightly more 'hard-core' hero—not cute, not hip, but ultimately marketable. And best yet? It was staggeringly playable and stunningly beautiful—a worthy successor to *Sonic* if there ever was. Too bad the best laid plans of mice and, well, you know.



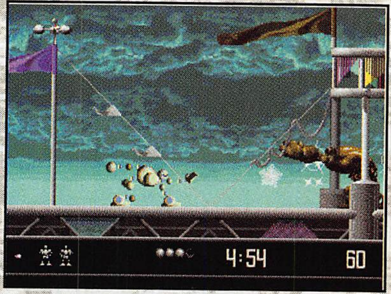






Making All the Right Moves

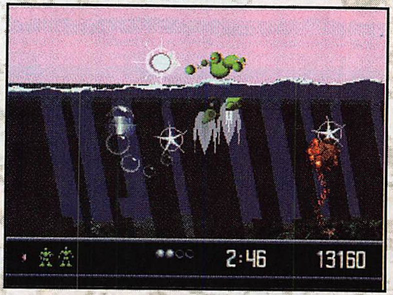
All right: you've got a rock solid title with massive playability, unearthly graphics and staggering design. You've actually got a marketing budget of note, and you're ready to show the world that an American team can easily and seemingly without effort craft a game that would make even the best Japanese teams green with envy: a game that plays better, and arguably, looks better than the juggernaut-that-was, *Donkey Kong Country*. The marketing peeps at Sega couldn't have had it easier—too bad things don't always go completely as planned. But enough of that... first, the glory that was *Vectorman*.



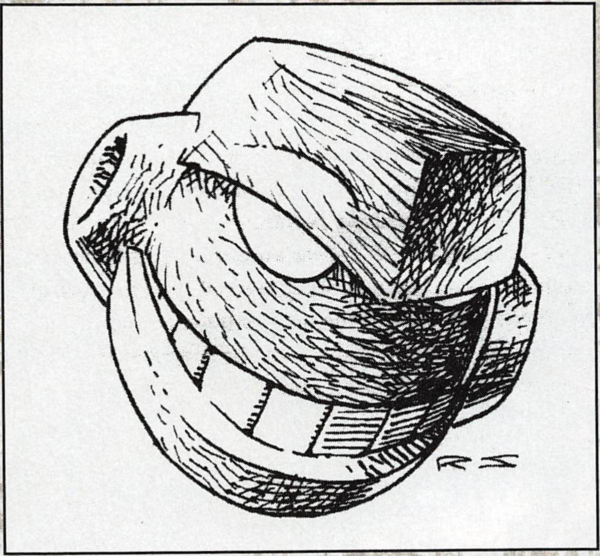
"...and as blazing as the character animation was, the special effects were even more so."

Blue Sky Indeed

If there's one thing that immediately grabbed you upon powering up *VM* for the first time, it was the staggering graphics—after all, I didn't know my little beat-up Genesis could do staggering lighting effects: lens flares, muzzle flashes, ambient light—though it was all pre-rendered it was nonetheless awe-inspiring to gaze upon. The first level alone, with its flapping pennants, parallax clouds and wicked character animation was enough to quash even the most jaded opinion of what the ancient hardware could handle—and if *The Adventures of Batman and Robin* had never come along, it'd probably be the single most graphically impressive Genesis game ever.

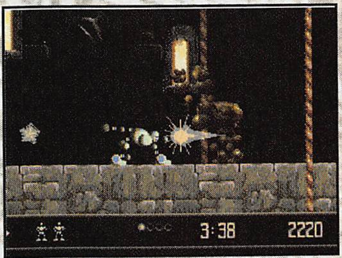


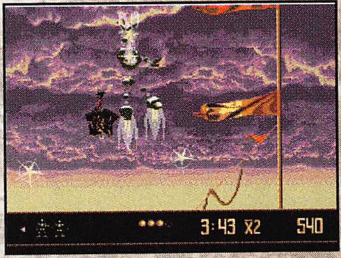
VECTORMAN

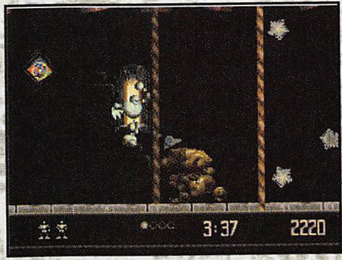














VM himself was composed of multi-sprites all animating along, *Rayman* fashion. While he had 'limbs' they were small series of floating spheres: shades of the hellishly poor *Ballz* come to mind (a game, to this day, the Judge has fond memories of <shudder>). The animation was staggering, and everything in the game shared this miraculous trait, with each 'sprite' composed of multiple joints, all animating as a whole. The effect was mesmerizing and made it an utter spectacle to behold.

And as blazing as the character animation was, the special effects were even more so. As mentioned above, there were even lens flares! It may be the most over-used effect ever, nowadays (soon to be supplanted by cel shading—watch for it) but back then this was truly remarkable stuff.

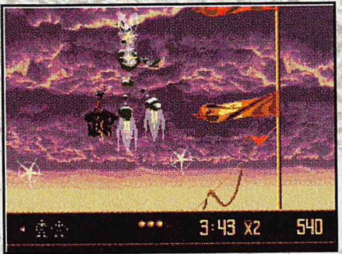
Lock and Load, Garbage Man

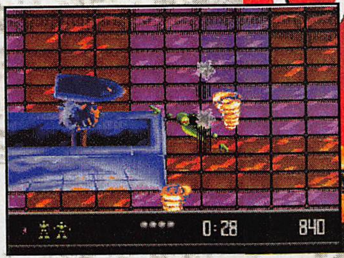
And what kind of game was *Vectorman*? Why, a red-hot action shooter, of course! It featured perhaps the best blend of platforming and blasting the gaming world had ever seen. Sure, *Contra* and *Gunstar Heroes* are grand, but they were more shooter than platformer—*VM* was as much platformer as it was shooter, with fabulous, spot-on control and impeccable play mechanics.

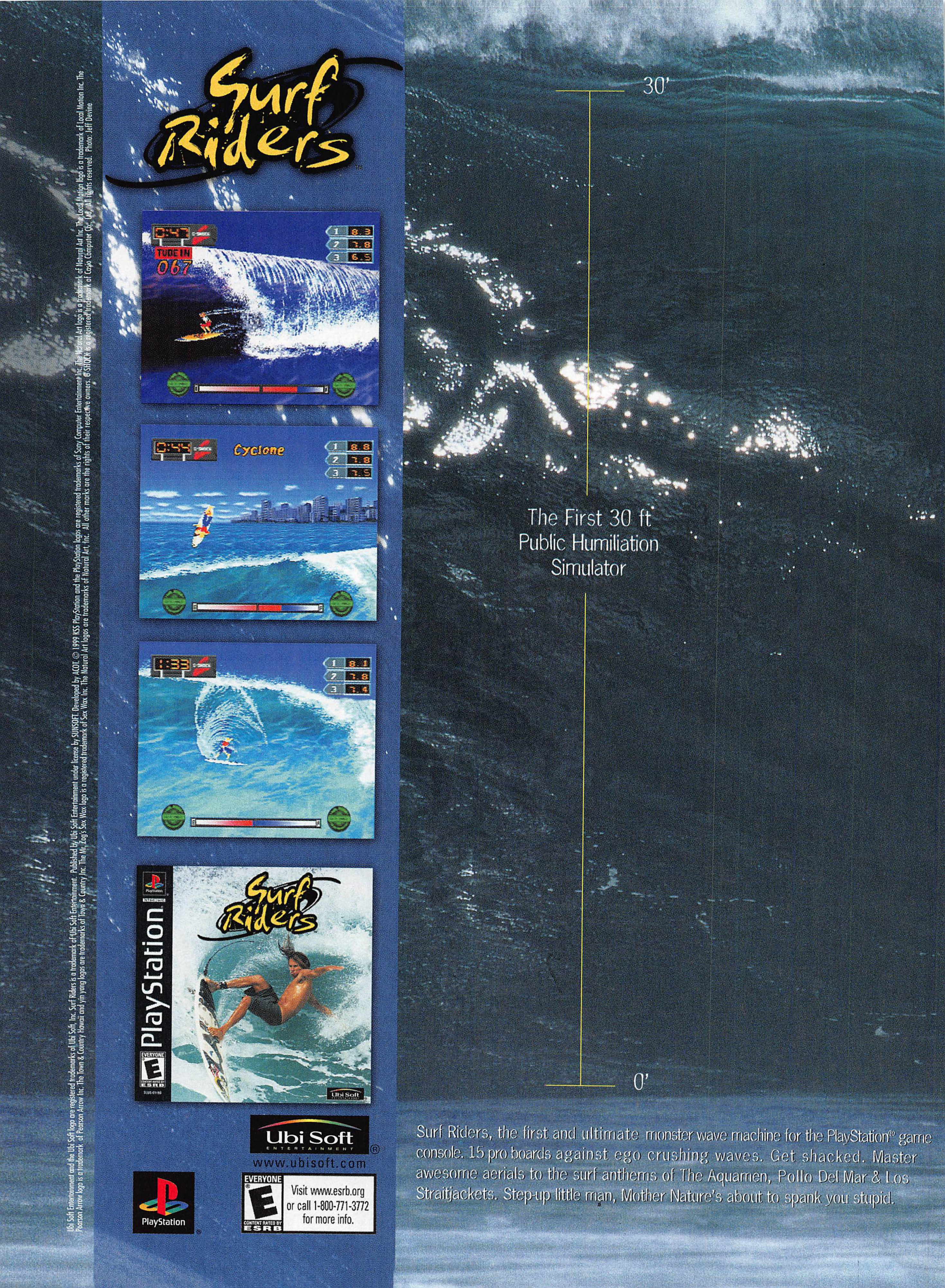
Tragedy Strikes!

And so, *Vectorman* was unleashed on a sea of eager Genesis gamers—and to rousing success!!! It sold amazingly well, and a sequel was immediately commissioned. Movie deals were in the works and everything was moving in the right direction... except for the market for games on the dear ol' Genny. Sadly, as the sequel splashed down on planet Genesis, the earth opened up and swallowed the market whole, and with it *Vectorman 2*. Add to that the sudden and inexplicable death of Blue Sky (and with them, the best series of baseball games of all time, to add insult to injury), a complete staff turnover at Sega of America, and the subsequent drubbing at the hands of Sony and complete lack of direction (what, no *Sonic* game?!) and *Vectorman* would never see the light of day again. Which is sad, cause he **was** a contender. For now, he'll just have to live on in our memories; our dreams of happier days. **ECM**









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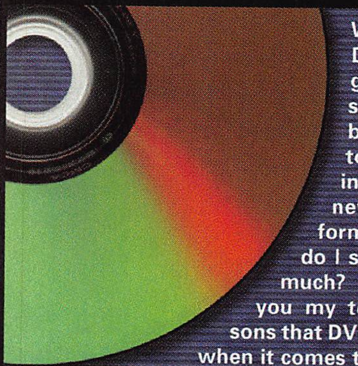
ANIME.MANGA.J-MUSIC.ASIAN LIVE ACTION.OTAKU CULTURE

As I write this, we are but a week away from the release of ***Capcom vs. SNK***. Could I EVER have thought that such a game would actually be released? No, of course not. And yet, just days ago, it got better. ***Last Blade 2*** for the DC as well? How awesome is that!? Of course, in this time of joy, there is also sadness. No longer will I feel any sort of purpose or meaning on Wednesday nights now, for my beloved ***Survivor*** is over. Yes, I indeed became a complete addict to that show. When I watch ***Survivor*** more religiously than ***WWF Raw*** or ***Iron Chef***, you KNOW something is wrong. Besides ***Survivor***, I've also become addicted to ***Unreal Tournament*** and ***Chrono Cross***. ***Unreal Tournament*** makes me say "Quake who?", and ***Chrono Cross*** is a first-class job all of the way by Square.

- shidoshi@gamefan.com

ANIMEFAN | SPECIAL | FEATURE STORY

DVD vs. VHS - Why is DVD So Much Better for Anime?



What makes DVD so good? Why should you be convinced to drop VHS in favor of the new digital format? Why do I support it so much? Here, I give you my top five reasons that DVD is the king when it comes to anime.

1: VHS is dying

VHS won't be dead anytime soon. However, VHS's reign is quickly crumbling. DVD is becoming more and more the priority in retail stores, as their VHS selection becomes less and less. The questions isn't if DVD will take over the pre-recorded market, the question is when. Which leads into the second part of this point - subtitled anime on VHS is dead. Okay, not dead, but looking far worse than VHS itself is. Retailers are beginning to refuse to stock some subtitled releases, because they just don't sell well enough (partially due to sub fans switching over to DVD). So, unless you're happy with dubs, you're going to need DVD. How many titles as of late have only been available subbed on DVD? That number is going to rise. And, in fact, some anime titles will be released ONLY on DVD. One such case is AnimEigo - all future releases from them will be DVD only.

2: Quality

Unless the DVD transfers was mucked up, or your home set up is so low-tech that you couldn't tell a difference anyhow, DVD will always look and sound better than VHS. Colors are richer, truer (black is black, not some mess of dark colors), the image is sharper and more defined, the audio is crisp and clear. Anime is a form of art, where clarity and color richness and quality of displaying the hand-drawn artwork are very important. When you look at art, you don't look at it through a pane of smudged, dirty glass - it would ruin your appreciation for the piece. Why do the same to anime by watching it on VHS?

3: Reliability

VHS doesn't last. EVERY time you watch a VHS tape, the quality of the tape decreases. That is fact. After a certain number of viewings, the quality of the tape can be so bad that it seems like you are watching a completely different show. That doesn't even account for VCRs that eat tapes, extreme heat or cold ruining a tape, etc. A DVD, on the other hand, will look and sound EXACTLY the same the first time you see it as the five hundredth time. This is VERY important for anime, because a lot of times a US anime release happens only once. A title comes out, rights are lost, and that title is never released again. My copy of ***Kiki's Delivery Service*** may never be able to be replaced should anything happen to it. So, even if DVD didn't improve the quality of the transfer, it would be worth it simple to have a copy that will last.

4: Price

Yes, a DVD player is more expensive than a VCR. However, in the long run, it pays for itself. Let's take the example of ***Haunted Junction***. On VHS, you pay $25 per 2-episode volume, or $135 for the entire box set. Yet the same full set is only $40 on DVD. A savings of $95, and it roughly equates to you paying $3.35 per episode. Now, not all DVDs will be cheaper. However, many times you get BOTH sub and dub versions of the show for a little more than only one of the versions on VHS, and you get the show in far better quality for what you pay.

5: Technology

Dub and sub on one disc. This is the PERFECT solution for anime, as it bring a solution to the age old sub vs. dub argument. With both on the same discs, you only need to release one version of the show, so there are less productions costs and no worries that one of the releases will bomb. Good for anime companies. Stores only need to have one copy to sell to fans, so there is more room for other titles, and both fans of dub and sub will purchase the same one release. Good for anime companies and retailers. We fans have the option to watch the show either way, and we get a transfer of the anime that isn't scarred with permanent subtitles. Good for us. You like subbed anime? Watch it that way. Having a friend over who isn't into watching things with subtitles? Switch to the dub. Everyone is happy.

6: Conclusion

Of course, there are still more examples I could give to you as to why DVD is the better choice. However, the five I have given above are what I think are the major pros when it comes to DVD. With countless quality anime DVD titles out there proving the power and potential of the format, there is no longer any point in which VHS wins in a battle between the two. ***- shidoshi***



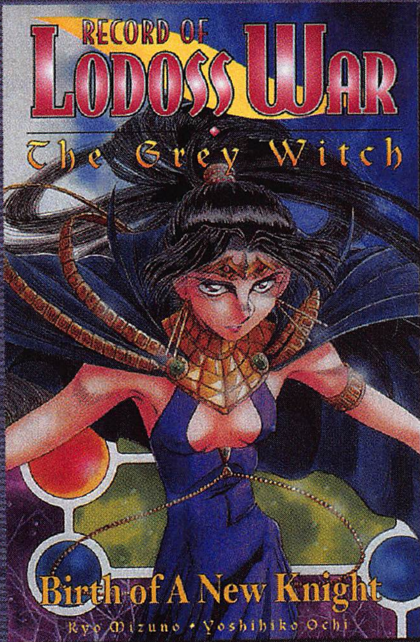


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Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch ~ Book 2

While travelling down a dirt road on a hot summer day, our heroes of Lodoss are passed by a strange caravan which carries two mysterious women. When the Holy Knights of Valis soon show up on the trail of the caravan, Parn and the others begin to wonder what is going on. They decide to follow the Knights and the caravan, but a short time later a huge explosion rocks the earth. The explosion was the result of a dangerous off-limits fireball spell, and its caster is a mysterious and powerful witch by the name of Karla. Now that the group has crossed paths with Karla, what awaits them in their future? ***Record of Lodoss War: The Grey Witch*** is another tale of Lodoss written by its creator, Ryo Mizuno, during the time at which the OVA series was released. The art for ***Grey Witch***, done by Yoshihiko Ochi, is a stark contrast to ***The Lady of Pharis***, another ***Lodoss*** manga I reviewed a number of issues ago. Where as ***Pharis*** had a sharp, dramatic style, ***Grey Witch***'s art is less harsh, and more warm and pleasing. At times, the characters are even cute and innocent looking, which is rather hard to accept at first given it is a ***Lodoss*** tale. However, once you get a ways into the book, the artwork becomes less of an issue and actually begins to seem very fitting for the story. ***Grey Witch*** is a bit easier to get into than ***Pharis*** was, a bit do to the more endearing artwork, a bit due to the cast of familiar characters and overall less complex feeling to the story. At once, this probably gives more readers a chance of liking this manga, yet at the same time feels almost a bit too simple at times. Of course, sometimes you want to just sit down with a good story, and not have to concentrate too hard. In this respect, I very much enjoyed reading ***Grey Witch***. I really like fantasy, but only when it is done right. Unfortunately, doing fantasy right isn't an easy task. And yet, I think ***Record of Lodoss War: the Grey Witch*** indeed got it right here. The story is interesting, but not too heavy, and is another chance to go on an adventure with the heroes we came to love from the ***Lodoss*** OVA. ***- shidoshi***

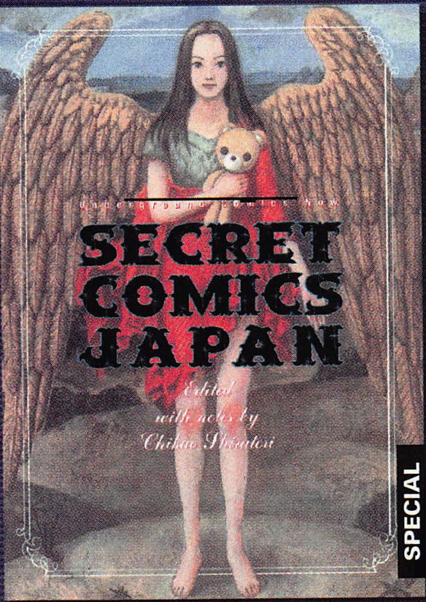
GPH NVL **B** good



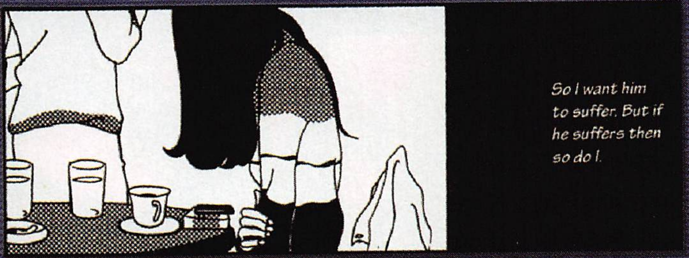
$19.95 • Collection • Viz
18+ • 200 pages • Jpn Format

Secret Comics Japan

While Viz has been rather quiet on the anime side of things as of late (except, of course, for ***Pokemon***), then have been doing major things for the manga market in the US. In fact, I'd say that in the last year or two they have had some of the most diverse, exciting releases that they've ever done. This brings us to ***Secret Comics Japan***, a phenomenal new release which collects a variety of "alternative" Japanese manga stories. Anyone who knows me knows I like the strange and unusual, and that is exactly how I would describe this collection of comics. No more proof of this is needed beyond the very first title which kicks off this collection, ***The Life of Momongo*** by Junko Mizuno. I first came to know the work of Junko from a copy of ***Big*** magazine that was passed on to me. That was but a taste, and here I'm given an entire course. ***LoM*** defies any explanation I could give you, and is at once both beautiful and stylish (in a retro kind of way), and morbid and frightening. I like how the introduction describes Junko and her work - "...she draws cute girls with beaming smiles who happen to be carrying skulls or playing with corpses." More disturbing, however, is ***Punctures***, a tale from Shintaro Kago that deals with the anxieties of everyday life. In this story, the desire to deal with these anxieties leads to some very extreme methods of coping. Slightly less twisted, but no less enjoyable, are stories such as ***Swing Shell*** by Yuko Tsuno, ***Jr.*** by Yoshitomo Yoshimoto, and two stylish stories by Kiriko Nananan, ***Heartless Bitch*** and ***Painful Love***. One of the best surprises of this book was ***Editor Woman*** by Benkyo Tamaoki. While not what I would call the best story of the collection, I've been a fan of Benkyo's art for a long time, and this was my first chance to see some of his manga work. Beyond those, there are even more intriguing short stories to round out this 200 page collection, and all are presented in their original Japanese-direction reading format. This book is certainly only for the more mature manga fans out there, but for those of you who do fit into such a category, I would highly recommend ***Secret Comics Japan***. Some of the stories are quite bizarre, twisted, morbid, and absolutely not for everyone, but for anyone looking for a bit of the "beyond the norm" manga, this collection couldn't be better. ***- shidoshi***



SPECIAL **A** superb



Panel from Painful Love. ©1996 Kiriko Nananan / Seirindo



Rom Comedy • OVA (12) • Viz Video
8+ • 375 min • Sub | Dub

Ranma 1/2 OVA DVD Collection

Curse you, Pioneer. Curse you, Viz. I sat down to check out Pioneer's third big DVD box set - the ***Ranma 1/2*** OVA collection - and as I watched, I realized something: I'm starting to like ***Ranma 1/2***. Yes, the series I have successfully stayed away from for so long has dug itself through the wall I had blocking it, bit by bit. Now, I have either fully accepted the fact that I enjoy ***Ranma 1/2***, or the OVAs in this collection are just that good. For all of you out there wanting more ***Ranma 1/2*** on DVD, here it is - 12 OVAs in one little box set, in fact. What stands out most about this collection is the video quality. These OVAs look gorgeous, a testament to either how well they were done originally, just how much skill Pioneer has in making DVDs look good, or a combination of the both. In addition to the video quality, we've got English and Japanese 2.0 audio tracks, properly done subtitles, fixed episode titles, and a smattering of extras from music videos to character profiles. If I was amazed at the high quality of the video, I was also amazed at the low quality of the menus. As good as Pioneer menus normally are, the menus here are amazingly bland. But honestly, bad menus can't bring down this great collection. I'm sure all ***Ranma 1/2*** fans out there either already have this box set or are selling off a kidney to have the money for it, but you other anime fans out there might want to consider it as well. If you are new to ***Ranma 1/2***, or if you are looking for a good way to get more into the series, this is a wise purchase for more expose to one of Rumiko Takahashi's most beloved titles.

DVD B+ good

- shidoshi

Adventure • OVA (1) • Manga Ent.
13+ • 60 min • Sub | Dub

Rayearth OVA - Volume 1

VHS A- superb

I like cute. I like comedy. I like light-hearted fun. And, I do indeed like the ***Magic Knight Rayearth*** TV series. However, as has been proven many a time recently, sometimes a show gains an extra something when it is given a different approach. A new way of telling its story. This is the case of the ***Rayearth*** OVA (no "Magic Knight" - just ***Rayearth***). Here we are given the tale of Hikaru, Fuu, and Umi retold in a darker, bleaker, more serious and "epic" fashion. As the story is recreated in this very way, I come to the understanding that this is exactly how the series should have been from the start.

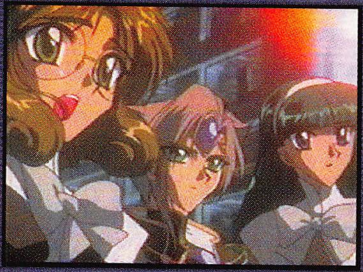
In fact, if I were to write the tale of ***Rayearth*** myself, this is almost exactly how I would have done it. With this OVA, there is a far greater sense of chaos and urgency. The three girls find their world suddenly falling apart around them, and they are faced with talk that they are the only ones who can save it. Yes, instead of being asked to save Cefiro, they are forced to save their own world from the very land of Cefiro. The two worlds are soon to be merged, and if this happens, we humans will be on the loosing end. The groundwork for ***Rayearth*** is just suited more for a serious tale, if you ask me, and here it is done brilliantly. This OVA has all of the drama and suspense of a theatrical anime movie - if only the production was a bit more grandiose. That's not to say that what is here isn't good, because it certainly is. The art style presented does full justice to the beloved CLAMP style, animation is sparse at times, but good when it needs to be, and the score is stunning and supports the action immensely. Manga's dub, unfortunately, doesn't do its job. I wouldn't call it bad, but it just didn't have the quality that the other aspects of the show did.



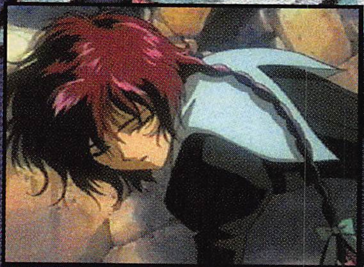
So, for me, this project to re-create ***Rayearth*** from the ground up was a smashing success. I'm not saying that I want the ***Rayearth*** OVA to replace the TV series, or that I can't still enjoy the TV series, but the OVA is a wonderful alternative that I absolutely recommend.

- shidoshi





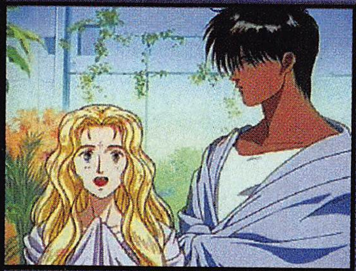


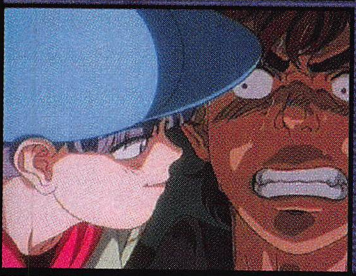




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Shoujo • OVA (6) • Viz Video
13+ • 180 min • Sub | Dub

Please Save My Earth DVD Collection

Long ago, in many a back issue of AnimeFan, I reviewed the first volume of ***Please Save My Earth***, and promised that one day I would finish reviewing the series. Well, here I am. ***laughs*** I really have nothing (well, almost nothing, see below) but praise for ***PSME***. The more I watched, the more I enjoyed the show, as the revelations of the plot work great to keep you interested the entire way through. Which is good, because the plot is a bit complex and heavy, even from the start. ***PSME*** is basically the story of Alice, her young neighbor Rin, five other high school students, and a group of people living on the moon. If I say more than that, I might ruin something for you. Let's just say that all of those people have a connection to one another - a very strange connection.

I found myself liking a lot of the cast; even Rin - who I absolutely hated (because he was so evil) throughout the entire show - ends up having a good reason for being the way he is. There is a rather grim, tragic nature to this series, especially when the truth behind the moon dreams is revealed. Maybe this is why I ended up enjoying ***PSME*** so, because of its more somber attitude. Visual quality was pleasing throughout, with an animation level showing that this OVA wasn't just some rush-job project. Mix that in with the super power of DVD, and ***PSME*** comes out looking and sounding great. Finally, the DVD contains a small selection of extras, including a very appreciated FAQ about the show. But now, I must break out into a rant. The ending. What in the world is up with that? I'm not the kind of person who always wants an ending that explains everything, but could we at least have SOME sort of wrap-up? No, instead, we have roughly the last minute try to quickly tie things up, and in the process give us little clue as to where things progress from there. It is like if you were watching Titanic, you got all the way up until the boat just started to sink, and then the movie suddenly ended with the words "The boat sank..." up on the screen.

Please Save My Earth is indeed shoujo, but it is still a series that I think most fans can enjoy. Most of the show is character development, done in such a way and style that really adds an impressive amount of depth to the show. This is one of those anime titles that relies on strong characters and storyline to give it worth, and I indeed think this show is very worthy. ***- shidoshi***

DVD **A-** superb

Action • Movie • ADV Films
15+ • 60 min • Sub | Dub

Sin ~ the Movie

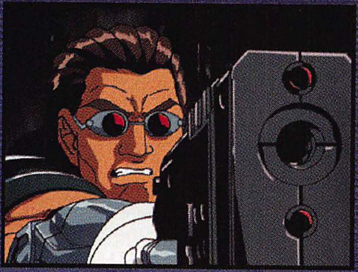


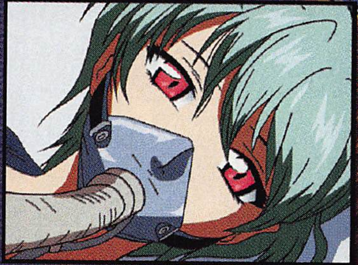
It is the 21st century, and a string of kidnappings have put the Harcorps., lead by John Blade, onto the trail of a bizarre creature. In the midst of the hunt, Blade's partner becomes a victim of a strange illness which drives him to become a monster himself. In his quest for vengeance, Blade is pushed into the direction of Sintek, the company who seems to be behind the genetic mutations.

Sin ~ the Movie is based off of the PC First-Person Shooter of the same name that was released by Ritual Entertainment in 1998. I'll be honest, I'd never even heard of the game before talk of the anime. However, after doing a bit of checking on the game, it seems that the anime actually follows the basic storyline and its characters quite well. In the tradition of ***Blade Runner*** and ***Bubblegum Crisis***, ***Sin*** is a futuristic action drama with great characters and an interesting storyline. ***Sin***'s cast is diverse, and our hero Blade is the typical "big, tough guy" yet still has a nice amount of charm to him. Sometimes the art quality is stunning, but at other times it more resembles your average anime. Unfortunately, there are two points in which things aren't so good. The CG, while not horrible, just doesn't fit in with the look of the anime, and seems really out of place. The other is more of a shortcoming: this film just isn't long enough. 60 minutes isn't enough time to flesh out the characters and story details properly, so the entire time things feel too rushed and fast-paced. Had ***Sin*** been 90 minutes, or a couple-episode OVA series, it would have had more of a chance to develop what was going on.

Baring the problem with length, I think ***Sin*** turned out pretty well in the end. It won't go down in history as a timeless classic, and had the potential to be much more, but it is a great action title that does exactly what it set out to do. If you're into the "future gone awry" genre, this is one to give a go. ***- shidoshi***

VHS **B-** good







Comedy • TV (4 eps) • Bandai
13+ • 100 min • Sub | Dub

Jubei-chan the Ninja Girl

Famous Japanese swordsman Yagyu Jubei is on his death bed, and asks his servant to find a successor so that the Jubei sword style won't be lost. His servant swears to find the person, and is given the "Lovely Eye-patch" - a heart-shaped eye-patch that Jubei has crafted which will reveal his true successor. For three hundred years the servant searches, until he comes across a young girl who has been nicknamed "Jubei." Jubei just moved to a new town with her father, and as if fitting in to a new school isn't hard enough, now she must deal with a 300-year old samurai who refuses to stop claiming that she is the reincarnation of the famous swordsman. When Jubei puts on the Lovely Eye-patch, she turns into a skilled and serious swordsman. However, a rival school wants the eye-patch for themselves, and is determined to defeat Jubei in combat.

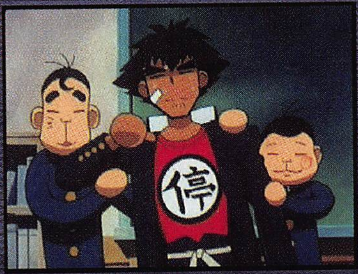
Jubei-chan the Ninja Girl was written by Akitaroh Daichi, who also had a hand in two of the funniest anime titles I've seen - ***Kodomo no Omocha*** and ***Elf Princess Rane***. Had I realized that he had a hand in ***Jubei-chan*** earlier, I couldn't have watched this series fast enough. Of course, I wasn't surprised to find ***Jubei-chan*** loaded with insane comedy. Just as in ***Kodomo*** and ***Rane***, there are points when things get so crazy in this show that you can do nothing but laugh and hope to keep your sanity. With ***Jubei-chan***, however, the more serious side of the show gets a surprising amount of showing. This is where the big consistency problem with ***Jubei-chan*** comes in - while ***Kodomo*** did go from funny to serious quite often, ***Jubei-chan*** is REALLY unbalanced when it comes to this. Episode two had me laughing almost all of the way through, yet episode three was completely the opposite and was far more serious. Some people have said that ***Jubei-chan*** would be better off as two different shows, splitting up the comedy bits into one show and the action into another. I might have to agree with this idea. Still, that shouldn't keep you away from this show. ***Jubei-chan*** looks great, especially thanks to DVD, the cast is (as expected) stellar and endearing, the comedy bits are utter gold, and the fight scenes are short, but sweet.

I wish the two halves of ***Jubei-chan*** didn't have to fight over screentime - both the comedy and serious elements of the show are worthy of getting as much time to shine as possible. I wonder how this series will pan out over time, and if the comedy elements will still have a place as the storyline kicks in later on down the line. Still, even with a great unbalance between the two elements, this is a show you simple should not miss. There is a lot to love here, and the constant swapping between humor and drama doesn't take away from that fact one bit. ***- shidoshi***

DVD B+ good







Action • TV (3 eps) • ADV Films
12+ • 75 min • Sub | Dub

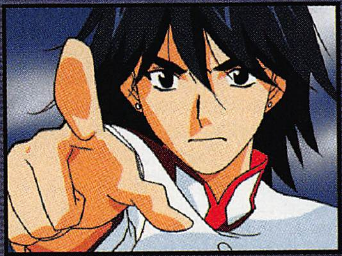
Generator Gawl

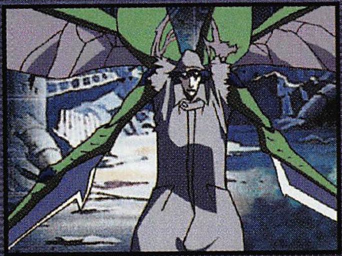
Our future is in trouble. What seems like a fabulous scientific breakthrough will one day lead to the decline of all of civilization. In order to stop this, three young beings are sent back in time to September 2007 in order to help save the future. Unfortunately, instead of arriving one year before the epic event, they arrive a scant three months. To make matters worse, someone doesn't want them to succeed in their mission to stop the future from going down the dark path it is headed on. The safety of mankind comes down to Gawl, who has the power of the "generators" - the ability to transform himself into a powerful mechanical creature whose power is the only thing that can stop the forces of evil.

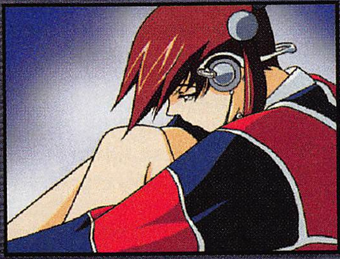
VHS B good

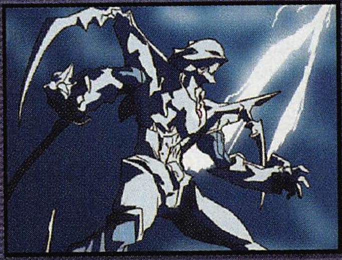
One of the best parts of ***Generator Gawl*** is the cast. Gawl and his two partners are intriguing from the start, and once they meet up with the strong-willed and untrusting Masami, there are a number of great comedy moments as the four of them try to deal with one another. It is nice to see such likable characters shine through so early in a series, and if nothing more at least the series will have that. So what more does ***GG*** hold? You've got a plot we still know little about, an "epic event" looming three months from the start of the show (cool idea), and strange robot-like creatures for Gawl to battle. Of course, we've seen the "hero changes into powerful being to defeat evil" before, but it is still an interesting concept. If only Gawl's "power" form was nearly as interesting as his human form - his transformation's character design completely rubbed me the wrong way. Visually, the show looks great (and will probably make a sweet DVD), and I had no real complaints about any of the show's other qualities.

In the end, ***Generator Gawl*** is a fun show. It's light hearted, the characters have a great chemistry together, and there seems to be enough action and plot present to keep viewers interested throughout the show. There are countless giant robots stories out there, but the personality and cast of this one really are good enough to make this show worth your time. Another solid release. ***- shidoshi***









Mononoke DVD Update

While there is still no real finish to this story, it is about time that I gave you an update on what is going on. ***Princess Mononoke*** should be released dubbed on VHS by the time you read this. So where is the DVD? Here's what is going on. The DVD was announced as dub only. Not surprisingly, the anime community FREAKED at this. A huge online petition was started, which gathered a large number of signatures in a few scant days. A few days later, the DVD releases was strangely delayed. Did Buena Vista hear the cries of the fans, and decide to do the release right?

An article titled "Disney Blinks" was a front page story in a soon after issue of the industry magazine Video Store Magazine. The article seemed to suggest that executives at Buena Vista simply "were not aware of the demand for a Japanese language version of ***Princess Mononoke*** - that is, until internet and letter writing campaigns brought in over 4,500 signatures in one week." According to Senior Marketing V.P. Robert Chapek, Buena Vista was "pleasantly surprised" by the demand for the inclusion of a Japanese voice track, and that he is very confident that an upgraded ***Princess Mononoke*** DVD should see release sometime before the holidays.

Pioneer DVD News

Pioneer has had some awesome announcements in recent weeks. First is probably what I consider the best of the bunch - ***Sailor Moon***! Pioneer has picked up the rights to the ***Sailor Moon S*** and ***SS*** TV seasons. What does this mean for us? We'll be getting a cut VHS dub release (basically what you see now on the Cartoon Network), an uncut sub VHS release, and an uncut DVD dual-language release. Yes, such a dream is indeed coming true - ***Sailor Moon*** TV episodes on DVD! As of right now, Pioneer still does not have the rights to the first two seasons - ***Sailor Moon*** and ***Sailor Moon R***. DiC still holds rights to these seasons, and it sounds like they are wanting a LOT of money to give up said rights. But still, at least we are getting two of the seasons at home, done right, and on DVD. That is a start, and a great one at that.

As well, Pioneer has also announced two more DVD collections coming soon - ***Hyperdolls*** and ***Phantom Quest Corp.*** The ***Hyperdolls*** DVD collection will be released on November 21st, and contains the entire 80 minute Hyper Doll series at a great $14.98 price point. The ***Phantom Quest Corp.*** collection will also be released on November 21st, and will be the complete 120 minute series for $14.98 as well.

Finally, Pioneer will be lowering the price of over 25 of their more popular anime DVD titles to under $20 each, with most of them being at the $14.98 price point. Part of this list are the three ***Tenchi*** movies - you CANNOT pass up ***Tenchi in Love!*** or ***Tenchi Forever!*** for that price. The really interesting part of this price reduction is that the press releases beings "In anticipation of the PlayStation 2's launch into the US market." Hmm. Interesting, ne?

More Yu for You From Viz

Viz recently announced their newest acquisition - ***Ayashi no Ceres***, the latest tale from Yu Watase, the creator of ***Fushigi Yugi***.

Ayashi no Ceres tells the story of Aya Mikage and her twin brother, Aki. Aya is your typical high school girl until her sixteenth birthday. A strange series of events is then triggered... a strange gift from her parents... a test which she fails... the realization that Aya herself is some sort of celestial being. Aya is forced to run from her family when they try to kill her, and must come to terms with what is going on and unlock the secret which is causing her life to fall apart.

Ayashi no Ceres will see release in 2001, with both the anime and manga versions coming from Viz.

Animerica Extra's Revolution

Recent news coming from Viz reveals a fabulous announcement - the ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** manga will be making its way to the US. Starting in December, the ***Utena*** manga will become a regular part of Animerica Extra. To make room for ***Utena***, it seems as if ***Marionette Generation*** will be reduced in page count.

Mixx's Circumstances

News recently came out that Mixx Entertainment has lost the US publishing rights to the manga version of ***Kareshi Kanojo no Jijou*** (aka ***Kare Kano*** aka ***His and Her Circumstances***), the latest project from Gainax. According the Mixx, the publishing rights had not been finalized for the US run, which was to have been called "He Says/She Says," yet for some reason the deal fell through and publishing rights are once again up for grabs. While the manga version is now in question, the anime version is still planned for release later this year/early next year from the Right Stuf International.

Bubblegum Finally Done Right?

Good news for those out there who are STILL waiting for a good release of ***Bubblegum Crisis*** on DVD. AnimEigo will be released a new set of ***Bubblegum Crisis*** discs in mid September. Titled the "Bubblegum Crisis Megaset," the price will be $69.95, and will contain new corrected versions of the three DVD volumes, as well as a fourth Hurricane Live disc, which will contain all of the videos, and a ton of extra goodies such as never seen before artwork. The discs will also be available separately for $19.95 each.

Ninja Scroll Toys to Market

For all of the ***Ninja Scroll*** fans out there, there's some good news. Palisades Marketing will soon be bringing out a set of four 6- 8" ***Ninja Scroll*** figures. Set for release in the first quarter of next year, this set of four figures will include Jubei, Tokugawa, Tessai, and a mystery fourth character. Palisades has been responsible for some awesome video game and anime goods, such as the awesome 11" ***Final Fantasy VIII*** figures (I need to get me one of them Quistis ones!) and the completely HARDCORE ***RE3*** Jill that is coming soon, so I'm sure these will be equally as cool.

If ***Ninja Scroll*** figures aren't enough, Palisades Marketing has a number of other cool anime products coming up in the near future. Working with Pioneer, they have put together a great line-up of products that all anime fans will want to get a hold of. While offering things such as ***Armitage 3***, ***Dual***, and a sweet looking Sol Bianca: the Legacy wall scrolls, and Ryoko and Trigun mini-busts, the absolute coolest product they have coming up is a ***Serial Experiments Lain*** lunch box. This lunch box will be part of an upcoming special ***Lain*** DVD set that Pioneer will be releasing, or you'll be able to pick the lunch box up separately as well.

Third Pokemon Movie for US

According to a report from the Hollywood Reporter, Warner Bros. has - unsurprisingly - picked up the third ***Pokemon*** movie, "Emperor of the Crystal Tower." WB plans to air this third Pokemon movie, which was shown in Japan over the summer along with the short "Pichu and Pikachu", in the US next spring. So, yes, ***Pokemon*** still isn't going anywhere for a while.

- shidoshi


From the director of Wicked City and Ninja Scroll!
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MIDNIGHT EYE
GOKU II:
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Tekken
Tag Tournament

After years of playing *Tekken* with my younger brother Dave, I've developed a fondness for the game, but, as in anything, proficiency only comes with practice. Back then, if you lost the daily match in the morning, you were two-fold cursed, forced to get up and make the coffee and wear the tag "Tekken Bitch" for the entirety of the day. Yes, shame and sheer laziness are a motivator like no other, so in order to help you get at very least the basics of *Tekken Tag Tournament* for PS2 down, here's a few things to get you started. Normally, Cerberus would be doing this type of thing, but seeing how I handed him his ass 3 times (with 5-1 victories each time) at a recent Namco press event (and the fact that he is now M.I.A.), the work— er, I mean, honor, falls upon me. **Kodomo**

10-hit combos: Okay, I'm going to assume that you have all sat down and practiced the 10 hit combos, only to actually try one against a good human opponent and either a) get duck-floated into a disgusting combo or b) get reversed every time, forcing you to choose between doing a chicken or taking damage. While the 10's work just fine on the computer, my advice is to skip them altogether when playing for keeps, and focus totally on Floating Combos.

Floating Combos: Any move that floats the opponent (obviously...), and allows you to land several well-placed hits before they hit the ground and recover. They generally fall into 2 categories: 1) Those than are done by pressing a button while rising, and 2) those that require a starter move. The only rule for inclusion here is that, after the first hit connects, the opponent is unable to block the remaining hits. The following 12 character combos (ranging from 5 to 7 hits) are merely intended to get you going and are by no means the highest that can be attained.

WS	Getting up from crouch	B	Hold back	RK	Right Kick	KEY
U/F	Up and Forward at same time	D	Press Down	LK	Left Kick	
D/F	Down and Forward at the same time	RP	Right Punch	SS	While Side Stepping	
F F	Two quick Forward Taps	LP	Left Punch		(quickly press Up or Down once)	

WHILE RISING — Paul



WS RP, LP, LP, U/F LK, RK ....5 Hits

WHILE RISING — Law



WS RP, LP, LP, B RP, LK, RK ....6 Hits

WHILE RISING — Jin



WS LP, RP, LP, RP, D/F RK, RK ....6 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Heihachi



F F RP, LP, LP, D/F LP, RP....................5 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Jun



F RP, LP, LP + RK (2 Hits), RP ....5 Hits

WS ....Getting up from crouch	B ....Hold back	RK ....Right Kick
U/F ....Up and Forward at same time	D ....Press Down	LK ....Left Kick
D/F Down and Forward at the same time	RP ....Right Punch	SS ....While Side Stepping
F F ....Two quick Forward Taps	LP ....Left Punch	.........(quickly press Up or Down once)

STARTER MOVE — Baek



F D/F LK, LP, LP, LK+RK (2 Hits)......5 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Hwoarang



F D/F RK, LP, LP, D RK, RK ....5 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Lei



U/F RK, LP, LP, F LP, RP, LP, RP, RK......7 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Bruce



U/F RK, LP, B RK, LK, RK..........................5 Hits

STARTER MOVE — Wang



U/F RK, LP, LP, D RK, LP..........................5 Hits

Cryptic Tekken Tag Tournament Q&A

A rather odd little discussion between GameFan Editor Kodomo and Game Designer/Tekken Tag Tournament Project Director, Katsuhiro Harada (previous projects include Tekken 3 (arcade) and Tekken Tag Tourn. (arcade)

GameFan: How many team members worked on *TTT* for PS2 and how long was the game in development?
Katsuhiro Harada: Around 40 people were regular team members with over 60 people involved in development of the game.

GF: Were you able to use any of the existing *TTT* code in the PS2 version?
KH: Some of it was usable; most parts were re-coded, however.

GF: What was the toughest thing about developing *TTT* for the PS2?
KH: Showing users the evolution from PS1 to PS2 or the arcade board (system 12) to PS2 and presenting impressive visuals were the toughest things for us.

GF: Can you explain a little bit about the motion capture procedure for *Tekken Tag*?
KH: For motion capture, there's much more time involved before and after shooting (photographing) than the shooting itself. The motion capture for *TTT* (optical for this time) included motions for a real time movie for the ending and a PS2 original opening movie. It began with preparations for pictorial continuity, followed by a preliminary meeting with motion actors, then the photography. The data is then revised and rendered manually in accordance with real character models and the game sequence.

The motion capture is generally thought to be easily incorporated into a game, but in reality, the data won't be used "as is." In most cases, they are processed and rendered by the motion staff, as to motion speed and behavior, to make them complete. Tekken motions captured are 30% or so and nearly 70% of motions are done by hand (inputting data manually).

GF: I've noticed that there are some differences between the Arcade and PS2 versions of *TTT*, specifically a slight difference in certain hits that connect. Is this just 'tuning' of the game, or was it done for some other reason?
KH: The game is not tuned for conversion. However, if you find odd behavior when putting motion data into the new character models made for PS2 *TTT*, there is a possibility that a little aberration may have occurred. Naturally, we don't want to see such an aberration or difference occur.

GF: Much critisism has been made of the lack of interaction with the 3D backgrounds. Was there any specific reason to retain them, rather than switching to a fully 3D environment (*à la Virtua Fighter 3* or *Dead Or Alive 2*)?
KH: It was impossible to implement it on the arcade board (system 12) for performance reasons. With the power of PS2 we could have developed a game featuring interactive backgrounds, but *TTT* was developed based on the idea that game play features from the arcade should be retained. So we believe work that may have changed game features wasn't required.

GF: Given that *Tekken 2* introduced reversals, followed by *Tekken 3* with side-stepping. How do you see series evolving in *Tekken 4*?
KH: When we develop a fighting game in the future, we intend to develop it by referring to feedback from consumers.

GF: What, if anything, can you tell us about Tekken 4?
KH: Eh? Eh? What about *Tekken 4*? Btw, do you like scary movies? (ECM's Note: First time with sarcasm, forgive him.)

GF: Are there any plans to develop *Tekken* for a platform other than PlayStation 2?
KH: Hmm... I'm not sure.



Advertiser's Index

Madame Lara Croft?

Eidos, the house that Lara built, has been on the shopping block for many, many months now, according to word on the street. The last rumor we heard was that the French-owned Infogrames would be making the announcement of Eidos' acquisition at the ECTS, the European equivalent of E3. Well, as we go to print, ECTS has come and gone and there was no announcement. There is, however, speculation that all this buyout talk could be a ploy to boost the company's stock value.

Nintendo's Focus Not The Gamecube?

Many fans were confused by Nintendo's decision to make the Game Boy Advance the main focus during Space World. But if you think about it, it was the right thing to do. There's much more incentive to promote the Game Boy Advance (the Big N's real breadwinner) than the Gamecube, a system that's more than six months away from being displayed in playable form (first time will be E3). Nintendo has probably learned from Sony's mistake of promising the moon and delivering only an overly-hyped DVD player. Internet fanboys were speculating that Nintendo was considering pulling out of the console race (as Sega has been oft rumored to do). After the festivities at Space World, however, Shigeru Miyamoto stated that about 70% of team members were working on Gamecube projects while 30% are working on Game Boy and N64 games. Looks like Nintendo fans have nothing to worry about after all.

Metroid!

It's no secret that American gamers have been clamoring for a *Metroid* game on N64, which never came to pass. However, if the tech demo footage of Samus running from a swarm of bugs shown at Space World wasn't enough of a clue, let's just clear this up now. The newly-formed, Texas-based Retro Studios (comprised of former Acclaim members who worked on *Turok*) has all but confirmed that its first title will be a *Metroid* game for Gamecube. The company, 'a second party' for Nintendo, is also working on sports titles for the new console.

Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior Return to Nintendo?

Could it be, RPG fans? Dare we even hope? It's rumored that representatives from Square, Enix, Electronic Arts, and Konami were seen at Nintendo's Space World, looking into the possibility of developing for the system. On the surface, this means nothing, as companies are always entertaining the thought of developing for other consoles. But just the fact that Square and Enix (makers of the two largest RPG franchises in Japan) are thinking about it should have Nintendo fans ecstatic. There would be nothing sweeter than a triumphant return to the glory days of NES and SNES RPGs. Game god Shigeru Miyamoto also said, "The Gamecube is the best system I have ever worked on. It might take a little work to show the big-named RPG makers just what the system can do. But I am convinced they will want to make games for our system. I know because I am personally going to show them what the system can do."

N64 Mother-less

On a darker note, *Mother 3* (known as *Earthbound* in the U.S.) has been put on indefinite hold for the N64. In other words, it's been canned. Hopefully, this title will see later release as a Gamecube game, but as of now, it's just wishful thinking.



Tired of importing your game soundtracks? Well, you'll be happy to hear this. *The Best of Final Fantasy 1994-1999* is a collection of 12 orchestrated songs from the last three *Final Fantasy* games. It will be sold at most major music retailers across the nation.

Spyro Flying To Greener Pastures

There was a time when Sony was considering *Spyro* as a mascot for the PlayStation. It's a good thing nothing came of that, because the purple dragon has decided to jump ship and fly to other consoles. Universal and Havas Interactive have stated that Spyro's fourth installment will grace the PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC, and Game Boy Advance. So much for console exclusivity.

Square Plans Three More Feature Films

It's well known that Square and Columbia Pictures are working on a *Final Fantasy* movie. Apparently, Columbia is so happy with the results it's seen so far that the motion picture studio has inked a deal to distribute three more films for Square. The budget for the *Final Fantasy* movie is already at $115,000,000, and it's scheduled for release summer of 2001.

Gran Turismo 2000 No End In Sight?

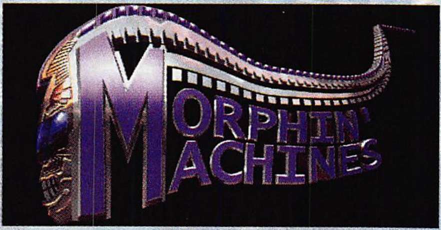
Among the announced titles at this year's European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* and *Rayman 2* are two of the headliners. Though it hasn't been announced as officially being there, the mysterious *Gran Turismo 2000* is rumored to be shown as well. This would be good news for supporters in the Sony camp, because various sources have whispered that the game won't even make it out this year. Considering we're a few months from Christmas and the game doesn't have a specific release date in the U.S. or Japan, it doesn't look good right now.

Blizzard's Next Project

Popular PC developer Blizzard (*WarCraft, StarCraft, Diablo*) is rumored to be developing a new franchise to bank on. We already know *WarCraft 3* and an expansion pack to *Diablo 2* are coming, but what awaits after that? Rumors of a first-person shooter have been tossed around. Personally, we'd like to see Blizzard return to its console roots; the company previously developed games like *Rock & Roll Racing, Blackthorne*, and *Lost Vikings*. Fortunately, we're not the only ones. *Diablo 2* producer Bill Roper has said he'd like to see the company do console games again as well. Although as we go to press, Blizzard doesn't have any plans or the manpower to do a console game (including a port of *Diablo 2*). [Eggo's note: Damn!]

Launchtime Disaster?

As we near the release of the highly-hyped PlayStation 2, there's murmurs of discontent emerging from the Sony camp. There's talk that not even one title has made it into Sony first party test (and this is two months prior to the launch of the system). Also, many of the third party titles are said to be ready for evaluation, but Sony isn't even ready for approvals yet. The nail in the coffin is speculation that Sony won't be able to produce enough units to meet the demand. The number we keep hearing is under 700,000 units ready by launch. The European launch has already suffered a delay and a price increase, as demand is far outweighing supply at this point. Of course, this could simply be a marketing ploy by Sony to drive up demand and eBay prices for the console. But if it's not, it could be a very merry Christmas for Sega and Nintendo, as disgruntled buyers turn to the competition if they can't buy a PS2.



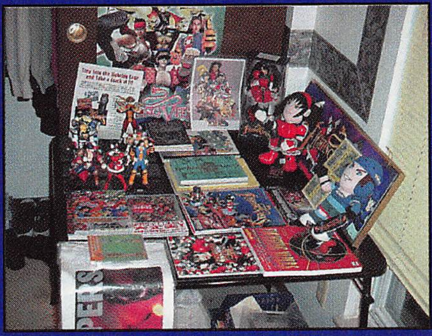
The Next Generation Race Continues...

From the same outfit that developed Freefall 3050 AD comes the newest nextgen racing game: Morphin' Machines for various platforms (PS2, X-Box, etc.). It features "real-time vehicle morphing on spline-based tracks"—what does that mean? It means it looks amazing—we'll be back with more as it develops.

Fury's Tales Of The Hardcore

Look around your bedroom for a second. Are your shelves adorned with video game paraphernalia? Do you save the spine cards for your import games? How many arguments did you get into with your friends this week about a game related topic? Does just owning the game not cut it for ya—do you feel the urge to take your moderately compulsive nature to the next level? These are the people we want to here about, and so far **Tales of the Hardcore** has delivered enough die-hard stories to prove that this often times misunderstood lifestyle, is definitely out there… and thriving. Consider Heidi Kemps, a college student from Iowa whose fascination with AM2's *Virtua Fighter* offshoot, *Fighting Vipers*, has led her down a most obsessive path. As if it's not enough to just own the Saturn version of *FV* (hey, back then some of us had to be content with 'near' perfect arcade ports… how easily we forget those days <sigh>), Heidi saw fit to lay down $400 bucks for the arcade version of this masterful Sega brawler (cabinet and all). Good thing for Heidi's sake, AM2 never made a sequel—or at least that's what you'd think if you lived in the good ole USA where Sega of America says "Hey gamer… you want *FV2* in the US huh? I don't blame you, how about *VOOT*… would ya like that? Well here, have some *Sega Bass Fishing* instead!" Needless to say, Heidi caught wind of this *FV* update and began her search for the ultra rare import board. What does $585 mean to a struggling college student? Apparently not a whole lot when you're as driven as Heidi! Now, lucky gamers in Cedar Rapids Iowa can pay homage to Yu Suzuki's *FV2* in person, as Heidi was nice enough to put her ultimate keepsake on display (right next to the water fountain). So if you're in the area, look up Cart-Mart, a local game shop that is now the temporary home of one of Sega's coolest and rarest fighters. And if you'd like to check out a great website, devoted to what else, but *Fighting Vipers*, here's the URL http://sno.simplenet.com/vipers.





$985.00+ HARDCORE METER

SUBJECT: Heidi Kemps
USELESS ITEM: one *FV* cabinet with *FV* board and an import *FV2* board (and assorted *FV* madness)
NO. OF USES: How cool is it that she keeps it on display for everyone to enjoy?

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

"Luckily it doesn't suffer from the same unlimited continue syndrome that most arcade ports these days do, so finishing it on anything but the easiest setting takes skill."
—Chris Johnston's review of *Cannon Spike* in the October issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*.

Y' know, we really hate to beat a dead horse, but there are just some things which we can't stand. Chris' allusion to "unlimited continue syndrome" is a perfect example of this. If you recall, last month in Ed Zone, ECM mocked people who thought games like *Strider 2* were too short or too easy because you had unlimited continues (EGM was one of the worst offenders). A month later, it appears that some of you still don't get it. So let's try again shall we?

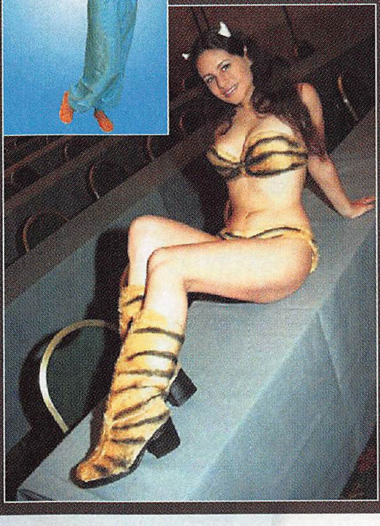
Listen up, people. Unlimited continues in a game like *Strider 2* are an **option**. Capcom (whether this be a good decision or bad) has given you the **choice** of continuing where you left off without any penalty. The second you see a timer counting down from 9, it's not a race to see who can hit "start" the fastest. Of course, if you were a real gamer, you would know not to reach for that continue button, opting instead to start over from the beginning. After all, if it takes you $5 to beat an arcade game, what does that prove? You simply have more money than skill? So be it.

If half these game reviewers had an ounce of skill (which, sadly is not the case with many of our peers in the industry), they wouldn't make statements like this (about *Gunbird 2*), "[If] you play the two-player mode, then you can rifle through the game's seven missions immediately." Sure this is true (if you continue like mad), but are you really 'beating' the game if you're hitting the continue button more times than you are the regular attack? Is that fun?

On a side note, we also took issue with the other two reviews of *CS*, but don't have the space to address statements like, "*Cannon Spike* is an extremely repetitive shooter" or "…despite how fun it is initially or how snazzy it looks, at the end of the day *CS* is an arcade game which means it gets old quick." <sigh>







COSPLAY CORNER

The pictures are of Jill Valentine from *Resident Evil 3*, Pullum Purna from *Street Fighter EX+ Alpha*, and Lum from the anime *Urusei Yatsura*

Vital Statistics

Name: Heather McCollum
Nickname: H-Chan
Website: http://cosplay.girlsofanime.com/cosplaygirl/
Eye color: Brown
Hair color: Brown
Height: 5'1" (I'm vertically challenged ^^;;.)
Weight: 115 lbs.
Measurements: 36-24-34
Location: Georgia, USA
Age: 22
Date of Birth, 10-06-77
Astrological sign: Libra/Snake
Blood type: B positive

Brief Description of Likes/Dislikes

Likes: cosplay (of course ^_-), art, traveling, sewing, martial arts, dancing, chocolate *mmmm…*, compliments, citrus soda, warm weather, scented candles, books, reading, birds (especially my cockatiel piper), tropical flowers/fruit, friends, family

Dislikes: bad dreams, small-minded individuals, smoking, drugs (the illegal type), mornings

Thought we'd try something new. Do you want to see cosplayers regularly in GF? Let us know by dropping Posty a line. We're also taking submissions.

THE POSTMEISTER

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!

The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367



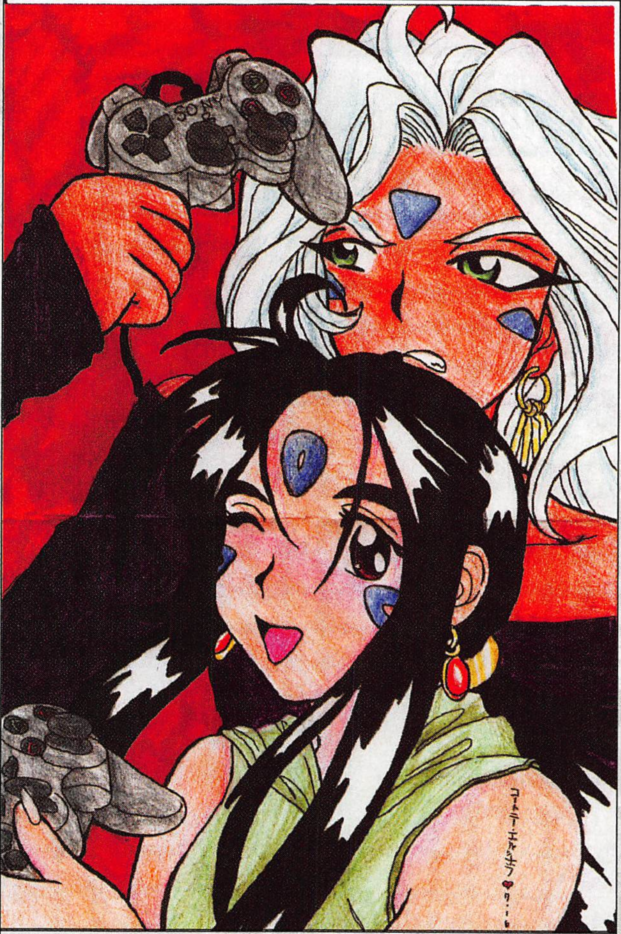
THE HORROR, THE HORROR...

ECM, as a sometime hardcore gamer, I just want to pass along a disheartening anecdote about *Strider 2*. I'm acting manager of a software specialty store and have had a difficult time keeping said fine Capcom title from being returned. This has been extremely frustrating not only to my store's bottom line but to my sensibilities as a gamer. Yesterday I suggested—as per your Ed Zone—to one weakling intent on returning *Strider 2* (because he 'beat' it) that he might 'not mash the continue button' and to 'spend more time with his games.' Well, the weakling left shortly thereafter, only to call me up this morning whining and screaming about how insulted he was by my suggestions. Of course, I had to apologize to this skill-lacking moron, which is one of the most disgusting things I've ever had to do at this job. On the plus side, I do encourage potential buyers of the game to limit themselves to a set number of continues in order to experience the best gameplay, and that has worked to an extent. But this is so damn frustrating, in this and in other cases. Every return on *Strider*, *VO:OT* and *SF3* is a grave occasion for me. I guess this just goes to show you—real gamers and profit margins don't mix, and stupidity is the greatest obstacle to true gaming enjoyment... just check out the PS2 lapdogs. Just wanted to pass along this story from the trenches—thought you'd be interested. In any case, keep ranting—it does every gamer a great service, even though 90% of them will never understand.

Still waiting for Gunbird 2,
M. McGinn

Dear M.,

Yeah, it's a sad, sad state of affairs. Forgetting the skill factor required to play all of those games for a moment, it kills us that such incredibly well-designed games don't get the respect they deserve from the majority of the media as well as the casual consumer. Yes, these games require a little more effort (above and beyond hammering the continue button); yes, not everybody is going to 'get it'; and yes, most casual gamers wouldn't know a good game if it bit them in the hindquarters. However, even then, you'd hope that occasionally a 'hardcore' game would break into the mainstream—something that seemingly has more limited appeal until you truly get involved in it. At any rate, we hear ya, M., and just know that it's hard to be a gamer these days.



Courtney Elshof of Fort Collins, Colorado sent in this little pic. It came in a pink envelope with a butterfly sticker on it. Nice touch Courtney. While being a fan of games, Courtney admits to "sucking" at most, except RPGs. It's ok, Courtney, Fury sucks at games too!

DOES THIS GUY SOUND LIKE A LAWYER OR WHAT?

Dear Postmeister,

As you no doubt know, the DVD CCA vs. 2600 trial wound down today, with the judge ruling in favor of the DVD CCA. He ruled that because of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, a new law which forbids "technological measures to bypass copyright systems," anyone linking to unlicensed software that allows the playing of DVDs can face legal repercussions. One of the supporters of the case has been Sony's Movie division, who stands to profit greatly from controlling the DVD standard with an iron fist.

The question I need clarified, and we all may be facing it soon, is does the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, as you and the people at Game Fan understand it, apply to videogame MOD chips as well? And if it does, do you see Sony (and the rest of the industry) pushing for similarly restrictive legal repercussions for those in possession of, producing, and or linking to sites that produce, sell, or explain mod chips?

Sincerely,
Chris Canfield

Dear Chris,

Now that's a question. As far as we understand it, yes, the law could be 'bent' to include video game mod chips, since they allow the playing of copyrighted material. And yes, we wouldn't doubt one bit that Sony and others may yet go down this road, especially considering the amount of money they claim to 'lose' to piracy (though it's hard to lose money you never had). However, if there's one thing you can be sure of, as long as Hong Kong exists, there'll be mod chips and unless China decides to actually invoke some laws in regard to patents and copyrights it's gonna be a long, long time in coming.

AFFIRMITIVE ACTION

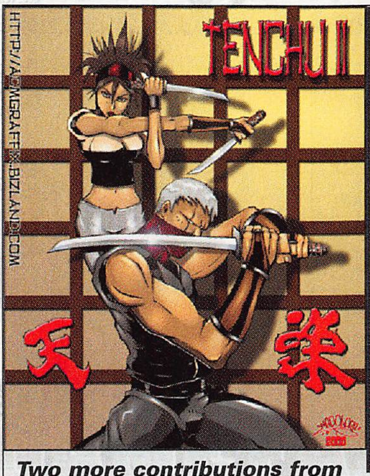
Dear Posty,

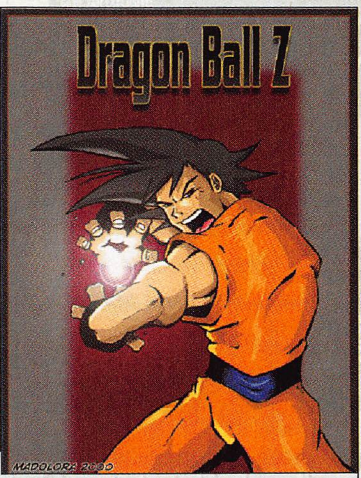
I was wondering how many females, if any, work at GameFan.

Truly yours,
Bunny
North Charleston, SC

Dear Bunny,

Yes, there are female employees at GameFan! Well, just one actually. Her name is Jennifer and she works in the front office helping with ad support and office management. We call her Mouse because she has a squeaky sneeze that carries through the whole office! That and the fact that she is like 5 feet tall (a "bitty" as I like to refer to teeny people as). She keeps just enough estrogen flowing in the office to keep us all from regressing into animals.





Two more contributions from Andy C. Madalora of Wahiawa, HI. You must be getting your fiber, Andy, 'cause you're getting to be pretty regular in the pages of our esteemed Posty. Keep it up! One thing, though: Could you send slightly larger versions of your stuff?

IMAGE IS NOTHING. THIRST IS EVERYTHING...

Dear Posty,

I have a question of dire importance for you. What ever has happened to all the good games like *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Ogre Battle* and *Silhouette Mirage*, on the PlayStation? I don't understand this concept that good marketing equals a platinum seller. All of my gaming friends are so zealous about everything PlayStation and they all say the same thing: "PlayStation rules, everything else sucks." And here I am wondering where this ungrounded response comes from. Not one gamer I know owns or has played any of the games I listed at the top. They say "There's no way I'll play those junkie games—hey is that a new *Army Men* game?" What's going on here, Posty!? Though some games that have mass marketing are good titles, what ever happened to the good games and systems [that prevailed] without mass advertising?

P.S. Please print this. I'd love to shove this into my superficial gamer friends faces because a pro agrees with me.

Trevor Freimuth
Reddick, FL

Trevor,

Sounds more like you live on the 6th Ring of Hell, not Reddick Florida. I can only imagine what it must be like trying to educate your friends on what good games are while they are frothing at the mouth over the next Army Men *game or, even worse,* ECW Wrestling*!*

Let's first clear something up. Your friends are not gamers—period. They are just consumers who have discovered their first electronic plaything. Like so many of today's "gamers," they discovered games with the release of the PlayStation and have little concept of what a good gaming experience is. They believe that Twisted Metal 3 *and* Tomb Raider 2 *are good games because the TV tells them so. "It is advertised on MTV, it must be good!" Alas, another soul is lost...*

It is a sad truth that good games are hard to find and seldom get the marketing push that blander fare garners. And there is a reason for this: Major publishers are about making tons of money, not about making good games (although their PR people will try and tell you otherwise). Following Hollywood's lead, game publishers are now concentrating on making games that appeal to wider audiences. They require less skill, less intelligence and have blander subject matter. The niche game is an endangered species that can only find sanctuary at companies like Natsume, Tecmo, Koeii and Treasure. Don't blame your friends, Trevor, they are victims in this; turned into mindless drones who are worked into a frenzy over garbage games like Blasto *because it has a slick ad campaign. And concerning those games you mentioned at the top of your letter, I can say only this to your friends: You are missing out for not playing them.*

PICTURES OF LILY

Dear Posty,

Please help me! I'm totally obsessed with Namco's ultra sexy vixen, Reiko Nagase. I've [owned] R4 for 11 months and I have barely played the game—I just can't stop watching Reiko's sassy curves! Posty, I know GameFan is the smartest magazine around, thus only you can find this information: Is there any Reiko Nagase merchandise that I can get and how do I get it? Thanks for any information! And yes, don't worry, I'll get a life.

Adam
(no address)

Adam,

Wow, did anyone else see the red flags go up on this one? It would be slightly hypocritical for me to go into a rag session on obsessing about a fake woman, but this would be coming from a guy that had the hots for Princess Leia. Then again, Carrie Fischer is a human...

None of that merchandise you are interested in is available in the U.S. outside of maybe import stores. My new suggestion to people looking for obscure items is to surf eBay. They seem to have everything.

GIVE THIS MAN A JOB

Posty,

I'd like to start off by saying that you guys rock (but you know that). I recieved my latest issue in the mail and as I was reading your mag I came upon the Setting The Record Straight section. Man that lit a fire under my ass real quick!!! I know what you guys are talking about with the other magazines, when I read some other unimportant, nameless (they weren't mine I swear) mags' reviews on *VOOT* I almost gagged. While a beautiful game, it is definitely not arcade perfect, the VRs have less polys and the shadows aren't



This gets the "So Damn Cute it Makes Me Want to Projectile Vomit" award. Lowena Ko of Coquitlam, British Columbia, writes, "Publish my artwork! Oh please, please please!" Ok, done. Now go back to moose wrangling.

dynamic like the arcade. Being that I'm not a mag editor or anything, why is it that I know that and these guys don't? They obviously must suck because the pad is a fine substitute for the twin sticks, it even makes the more complicated CC attacks easier to execute. I wish I could let them use Twin Sticks (which I doubt they've ever even held before) in a fight while I use Specineff with the pad and take 'em apart. I've also heard magazines say that it's too difficult turn with the pad (HELLO, jump cancels??????) and some even say that CC is useless (HAHAHAHAHAHAHA, I'd like to show 'em what Apharmd can do with Quick Step CCs). Hell, magazines (except for you guys) in general have all become soft over the years. I remember when *Legend Of Oasis* came out and one magazine (cough cough EGM cough cough) gave it low scores and complained it was too hard!!!!! Then I picked up your issue (the only mag with balls to put the game on the cover) and read about how good the game was, and even though it was difficult, you never degraded the game to garbage—that was when I began to buy your mag exclusively. These are also the same people that a few months ago said "*Strider 2* is too easy thanks to the unlimited continues." What kinda crap are these guys on??? You covered that in the Ed Zone though so I won't sweat it. I also remember these people saying about *Giga Wing* "I found myself dying on purpose so I could get bombs, but the game is so easy." Aaaaaaaaargh. It frustrates people like me who get up to the 5th board in *Mars Matrix* on one credit then start over when I die. These people would probably say I suck because I can't beat the game, it's not that I can't it's that I will do it when I'm good enough. I'm glad you guys stay true and hardcore, well more so now I've been around since the Ol' GameFan crew and I must say you guys seem even MORE hardcore. But what can we expect? These are the people that SWEAR the PSX is the greatest console ever, and that *Final Fantasy VIII* is the greatest RPG ever. Well whatever. Screw them, you guys rule the freakin' world.

Dave Berney
New York, NY

Dear Dave,
I am faxing you a job application as I write this...

IS THIS MY EVIL TWIN?

Posty,
Hellooo people of people, how are you doin?

posty@altavista.com

There's a Posty at Altavista.com? Where are the GameFan lawyers...?

FRIDAY NIGHT FIGHTS

Dear Posty,
Greetings, I have a question: Who would win in these matches?
1.Eggo vs. Dangohead
2. ECM vs. El Niño
3.The Judge vs. The 6th Man
4. Kodomo vs. Core
5. Fury vs. Cerberus
6. You vs. Waka?

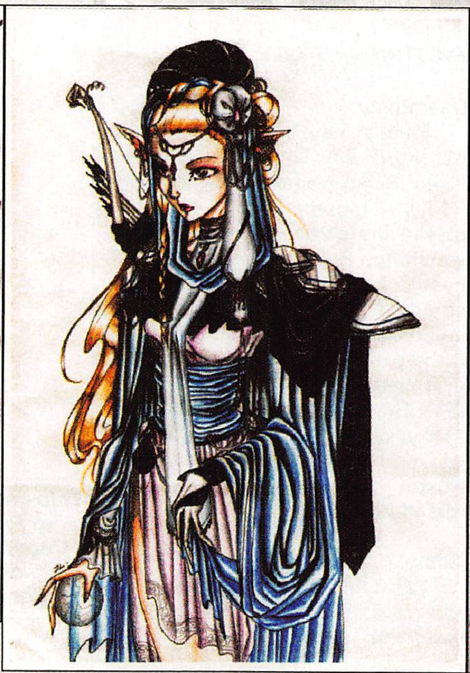
Thanks for your time
tuxedo_mask8 (via e-mail)

Dear Tuxedo,
An interesting question that demanded to be addressed. So, last Friday we called together the GameFan staffers, current and past, and held an amateur rumble, Thunderdome style. This may not have been the best idea, though, since the rules stated that anything goes and I was forced to square off against Waka. He is a master in Kendo and beat me like I was a mule with a quivery colon. The match lasted eleven minutes but that is misleading since I went down at 45 seconds. The rest of the bout was Waka pummeling my unconscious form. That's all we are going to say about that.

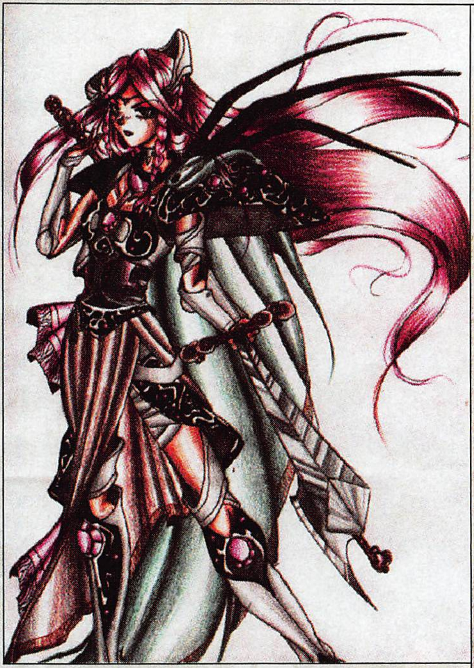
Eggo Vs. Dango *was much more interesting and went for almost a full half hour. Although Eggo has no real fighting skills (despite his ninja appearance), it was unbelievably hard for Dango to hit him*











since he is 2D. Eventually Dango was tired out and Eggo licked all of the powdered sugar off his head.



Kodomo Vs. Core was a surprise. You may think that Core would have smoked Kodomo, considering how tiny he is, but Kodomo was so pumped full of Red Bull and diseased with Mad Cow and scurvy (so is he a Limey then?) that he descended on Core and K.O.'ed him in a mere 2 minutes.

ECM Vs. El Niño was a sight to behold. The sheer mass of the Mexican grappler versus the blind fury of a berserking dwarf; the immovable object meets the unstoppable force. Little did ECM know that, before joining a pro wrestling league, El Niño paid the bills midget-tossing for pesos. The majority of the early rounds saw ECM flying through the air and into the chain link. You can't keep an angry dwarf down, though. Powered only by bitterness and an overwhelming sense of malaise, ECM eventually wore El Niño down and forced him to surrender out of frustration.

The Judge Vs. The Sixth Man... or as we like to call him: Door Number Three. This match was a foregone conclusion. The Judge, with his mighty Weak Sauce Gavel, sent the Sixth Man home in a box. We are currently taking applications.

Cerberus Vs. Fury was over before it started. Fury never showed to the fight location because he refused to fly.

The art pieces on these two pages all come from Janet La France of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Very nice work, Janet. I was unaware of our high readership among young Canadian women with artistic talent. Being artistic from Canada gets you a very big Joey Lawrence, "Whoa!"






TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Animated Violence


HOW TO GET A KILLER TAN.
Screenshots are from the PlayStation® game console
ARMY MEN
AIR ATTACK 2
REAL COMBAT. PLASTIC MEN.®
Not even an SPF 200 can save their tan hides now! CAPTAIN BLADE LEADS THE RAID in the most intense, hyper-fast helicopter action game flyin'!
With your lethal arsenal of pyrotechnic weaponry, you'll be fryin' some serious plastic butt.
READY OR NOT... HERE THEY COME!
3DO™
www.armymen.com
Available for PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system,


In Your Face Terror
Now experience terror in first person perspective.
Introducing Resident Evil Survivor.
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Animated Blood and Gore
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